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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the ways composition pedagogy emerges out of and gives way to the dynamics of space. At one level, the study describes the attempts of one community college instructor to create a writerly space for his students, and at another level, it describes how those attempts resonate with broader conceptions of academic space. Chapters 1 and 2 develop a narrative about the particular difficulties and pedagogical crises of teaching composition at a community college. This narrative suggests that those crises relate to problems of academic space. Therefore, chapter 3 turns to the field of critical geography. Using the terminology and theoretical perspectives of critical geography, chapter 3 describes the dynamics of space and time in American culture, particularly, the characterization of space in capitalist systems. Chapter 4 applies critical geography's spatial terms and concepts to composition, specifically, to the problems of teaching composition in the real-and-imagined space of a community college. Chapter 5 argues that the increasing numbers of part-time, commuter college students are changing the spatial orientation of college students. The study concludes that the nature of academic space is changing, not simply with the rise of community colleges in the United States, but also with shifts in student demographics. Appended are composition course descriptions. (Contains 127 references.) (NB)

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Writing in Place: A Story of Geography and Composition Pedagogy

A dissertation by Jonathon Douglas Mauk

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WRITING IN PLACE: A STORY OF GEOGRAPHY AND COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY

Johnathon Douglas Mauk

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the ways composition pedagogy emerges out of and gives way to the dynamics of space. At one level, the study describes the attempts of one community college instructor to create a writerly space for his students, and at another level, it describes how those attempts resonate with broader conceptions of academic space.

Chapters one and two develop a narrative about the particular difficulties and pedagogical crises of teaching composition at a community college. This narrative suggests that those crises relate to problems of academic space. The scholarly problem, then, is that composition studies, as a field, has not necessarily provided adequate discourse for an analysis of academic space. Therefore, chapter three turns to the field of critical geography. Using the terminology and theoretical perspectives of critical geography, chapter three describes the dynamics of space and time in American culture, particularly, the characterization of space in capitalist systems. Chapter

four applies critical geography's spatial terms and concepts to composition, specifically, to the problems of teaching composition in the real-and-imagined space of a community college.

The study concludes that the nature of academic space is changing, not simply with the rise of community colleges in the United States, but also with shifts in student demographics. Chapter five argues that the increasing numbers of part-time, commuter college students are changing the spatial orientation, or spatial ontology, of college students--away from a traditional residential consciousness to that of a nomadic consciousness. Academic space, then, might be seen less as an intellectual/social center, as it has traditionally been conceived, and more as an element in a centrifugal, or unsituated, way of life.

INTRODUCTION
ERRED EXPECTATIONS

Prior to my current position in the Communications/Humanities department at an urban community college, I worked at a public junior high school. I went to Smith Junior High[1] as part of a university program conceived to build relations between the university and area schools. At first, I observed and assisted language arts teachers with general classroom proceedings, all while trying to remain outside the teacher/student dualism. While getting to know the school's terrain, the geo-politics of junior high life, I began to perceive an on-going contest, one not simply between students and teachers, but between students' social sphere and that of the school. I was surprised to witness the flagrant, publicly-performed opposition between what-teachers-hoped-to-get-done and what-students-tried-to-thwart. And once I detected this extra-intra-curricular dualism, I noticed it enacted in every classroom, in every activity, in every assignment, and inscribed on every student's body, on every teacher's face.

Anti-Writing: A Climate, Not a Form

Not long after I arrived at Smith Junior High, I settled into a specific classroom and teamed up with a language arts teacher. In her class, I learned early on that writing, for the students, was the single most reprehensible activity in their junior high lives, the thing to be most avoided and openly contested. When an assignment even hinted at the use of a pen and a blank piece of paper, students protested openly. Writing assignments seemed to provoke the implicit antagonism between students and teachers. The students protested daily writing assignments--whether they were responding to literary texts, writing letters to peers, or drafting their own fiction.

When I began reading through students' written work (after they were cajoled or threatened into using a writing utensil), I immediately noticed pre-packaged (five-to-seven sentence) paragraphs, pre-formulated organization, and risk-free claims--all features of what Jasper Neel (and probably much of the composition studies community now) calls "anti-writing."[2] Such writing is often explained as "voiceless," unattached

and vacuous assignment fulfillment. It says to the reader, in Neel's terms,

> ...I hold no position. I have nothing at all to do with discovery, communication, or persuasion. I care nothing about the truth. What I am is an essay. I announce my beginning, my parts, my ending, and the links between them. I announce myself as sentences correctly punctuated and words correctly spelled.[3]

But, as I learned about the context of writing at Smith, I was led to believe that "anti-writing" did, after all, have a rhetorical position, that it did have a voice. Granted, the voice was not that of traditional academia, the self-present literary scholar offering personal insight to an audience; instead, it was the voice of a disinterested, uninvolved adolescent faced with the drudgery of academic prose. It said to the reader: "This topic and the empty process of writing about it is of no interest to me." In other words, my conclusion was that students were anti-writing because they were not

involved in the subjects about which they were writing. They were, I thought, bored. And, certainly, to some degree, the very process of holding a pen and moving it was foreign, and so intimidating, to them (as Shaughnessy's Errors and Expectations might suggest).[4]

The more I experienced the students' behavior and the more I explored the topic of uninvolved (and outwardly defiant) students, I came to the conclusion that the Smith students were not merely disinterested *in* particular writing subjects; they were disengaged *as* writing subjects.[5] The opposition to writing was much more profound, and attached to a political posture far more complicated than boredom. The students remained largely uninvolved as a matter of identity, as a matter of positioning themselves outside of writing--an act they understood as complete capitulation to their stodgy teachers.

Robert Brooks' use of the term, "underlife," best describes what I was witnessing. Underlife, says Brooks, refers to "those behaviors which undercut the roles expected of participants in a situation--the ways an employee, for example, shows she is not just an employee, but has a more complex personality outside

that role." Underlife is a set of strategies for constructing one's identity outside of those assigned by an organization. At Smith Junior High, underlife was represented by those behaviors which expressed identity outside of or even in opposition to an academic identity--in this case, the solitary writer working in silence. It was manifested in behavior that defied assignment deadlines or class schedule. For example, many students regularly waited in the hallway after the bell had rung, and entered the classroom announcing their tardiness for other students and their teacher to hear. Such an act challenged the assumed authority of the organized schedule. It said, in essence, "I exist outside of the official organization, and it is only through my own decision that I am temporarily complying to it." Acting in accordance with the official organization was relinquishing control of one's identity. As Brooks describes:

> ...social organizations are places where individuals are placed into certain roles. Appropriate activity in these roles carries with it implications about identity. In a

> school classroom, for example, prompt and accurate completion of tasks set by the teacher carries with it a "good student" identity, and a student who always complies pleasantly will be understood as smart, well-mannered, possibly a teacher's pet.[8]

For many, or most, of the students I worked with at Smith, writing represented the ultimate "academic" activity. That is, it demanded behavior which typified existence within the official organization of school: silence, solitude, isolation, immobility. Such behavior was contrary to their social milieu, to their space in the schoolyard and hallways that were noisy, frenetic, and interactive. The act of academic writing, then, embodied the ultimate threat to social identity. In interviews, many students explained that they rarely ever wrote outside of school. Writing, it seems, represented a subject position that was, for these students, inherently anti-social. Monica, a student in the first hour Reading class, explained that writing made her feel closed off from her peers: "I don't think we should have to write. It [school] should be about

getting involved...I mean, you could have some activities games and fun stuff, things that will make kids want to learn more." In other words, Monica wanted school work to include, to maintain the momentum of, the social continuum that students generated in between moments of teacher-controlled activities.

However, neither teachers nor students allowed such inclusion. The space at Smith, as it had been defined, was marked by the pronounced distinction between student activity and academic activity. Academic activity was perceived, perhaps by both students and teachers, as contrary to the kind of sociality that students initiated. Student-initiated activity was bombastic, hurried, and charged with social rituals. Teacher-initiated, or academic, activity was quiet, methodical, and organized. So when students wrote (reports, essays, poems, commercials, rants, etc.), they often did so in a way that maintained the opposition between their social and, what they perceived as, "academic" life. They chose not to integrate who they were with what they wrote, but maintained their social (underlife) identities while only accommodating the writing

assignment--submitting a piece of paper with their name above some scribbled text.

My response to the dualism at the school, as a resource person from the university and a budding composition scholar, was to change the act of writing for the students, to use writing as a means of easing the social/academic tension in the classroom. I hoped to get students at least slightly interested in the practice of writing, to get them to stop contesting the assignments ("no way, man, I'm not doing that!") and, at the very least, to make conscious decisions about what to write, and how to write it. Therefore, I prompted them to focus on their social lives--to get them to write what they were talking (screaming) about in the hallways and between teacher threats in the classrooms, to get them to think and write about those moments that were supposed to be left at the classroom door (but never really were). This was my attempt at, and my understanding of, "student involvement."

In order to bridge the gap between the students' social lives and their perceptions of academic writing, I began creating assignments which prompted them to explore and report on their own lives outside of Reading

class. I brought them old newspaper articles about neighborhood surrounding Smith Junior High, and then prompted them to write mock newspaper articles about the area, about their school, about one another. To some degree, these tactics worked. Many of the students actually found the work invigorating enough to generate more than a few lines of writing; sometimes, students churned out entire pages, describing their homes and neighbors or persuading their peers to avoid gang members.

Theory-Making

After leaving Smith and taking a full-time position at a Gordon Community College, I assumed my time with the junior high students would serve me well. My strategies for getting the junior high students involved seemed sound, so I did what most teacher/scholars would have done: I turned them into a theory--a transferable set of assumptions for carrying on practice. But this theory of involvement was not entirely transferable; or, more accurately, it was not yet fully developed.

The student population and pedagogical climate at the community college facilitated the further development and revision of my earlier theory. This

latter environment provided (and still provides) a complicated understanding of student involvement, and of what it means to write in, or at the margins of, an academic setting. At Gordon Community College, I began to perceive the significance of the environment itself--not simply the politics of the school or campus, but the entire geography that constituted students' lives and surrounded the community college campus. I realized, after several pedagogical and theoretical stumbles, *that getting students involved in the act of writing had something to do with fusing (or even re-writing) academic space and the spaces which made up students' non-academic lives.*

This dissertation, then, is a story about the development of a geographical theory of writing pedagogy. This theory emerges in response to pedagogical crises and uncertainties. In chapter one, I explain the particular pedagogical crises of my composition classes at Gordon Community College. Chapter two takes a broader perspective, examining the pedagogies of full time writing instructors in the Communications/Humanities at the college. At the conclusion of chapter two, it becomes rather apparent, I hope, that my own pedagogical

stumbling and the crises throughout the Gordon Community College Communications/Humanities department require a complicated understanding of academic space, that student involvement (and resistance) is inextricably bound to prevailing conceptions of academic space. In response to chapters one and two, chapter three introduces the field of critical geography, and explains how theories and conceptions of space have developed in academia. Chapter four, then, applies the theoretical apparatus of critical geography to the pedagogical predicaments described in the first two Chapters, and offers a reconciliatory perspective, a pedagogy at the intersection of the social/academic dualism.[9] Finally, chapter five suggests the implications of such a theory on the field of composition, and on higher education in general. As this final chapter suggests, it is no particular theory, I believe, so much as the set of pedagogical circumstances that arise throughout my story that will become an increasingly common source of discussion within the field of composition studies.

[1] To protect the teachers, students, and administrators at this school, the name has been changed.

[2] Neel, 85.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Here, I am referring specifically to Shaughnessy's introductory discussion of error as a sign of students' "general humiliating encounter with school language" (10).

[5] Here, I use the term "subject" to suggest an identity constructed from discourses--a suggestion which emerges from post-structuralist assumptions about language and identity.

[6] Brooks, 96.

[7] Brooks, 97.

[8] Brooks, 97-8.

CHAPTER ONE.
"MAKING ALL [THEIR] NOWHERE PLANS FOR NOBODY": INTERVENTION, PRESENCE, AND PLACE PROBLEMS IN THE CLASSROOM

> "Nearly all human beings have an extremely intermittent grasp on reality. Only a few things, which illustrate their own interests and ideas, are real to them; other things, which are in fact equally real, appear to them as abstractions.... Your friends are allies and therefore, human beings.... Your opponents are just tiresome, unreasonable, unnecessary theses, whose lives are so many false statements which you would like to strike out with a lead bullet."[1]

"What? You're giving us homework?"

"Uh...yeah." I really didn't know how else to respond to the question. It seemed absurd. The student (a first year, first semester, first-time-ever-in-college type) had probably not done anything resembling homework in several years. And I (a first year, first semester, first-time-ever-in-a-community-college type) had assumed homework, or just work, was common currency for all post-secondary students.

This kind of exchange, I'll call it the discourse of mutual surprise, defined my first year at Gordon Community College.[2] I understood early on that Gordon students, for the most part, were like the Smith Junior High students in one specific way: they were not prepared to invest themselves in academic life; that is, they wanted to come to school, complete requirements, and go away, to disappear from campus and not return until five minutes before their next class meeting. And, like the Smith students, many of my college

composition students at Gordon remained uninvolved and openly resistant to the practice of writing throughout the semester--even with the threat of failing a course. I got the sense that students were coming to school hell bent on getting out the door. And unlike students I had taught at universities, they were not anxious to get out of class and hang out somewhere on campus. They were anxious to leave class and get off campus entirely.

As a new composition instructor, in a new environment, I groped for meaning, for some pedagogical lens through which to better see my students. It seemed that I had four different types of students,[3] each type possessing a specific anxiety about college--hence about writing in college. The first type were parents: parents of children, teenagers, teenagers in trouble; they were single mothers with children at daycare facilities, or at their neighbors' homes; they were single mothers running from abusive husbands; they were what higher education has come to know as "non-traditional" in that they were not directly out of high school; instead, they were five, ten, or twenty-plus years out of high school (or out of some experience they vaguely remembered as high school). Their lives had become everything but school; they had not only become parents, but also care-takers for their aging mothers and fathers; they were men and women working two jobs and coming to school between them; they were working overtime and coming to school between shifts.

These students did not necessarily resist academia (as the Smith Junior High students); rather, they recoiled from the commitment that academic work was demanding of them. They clung to every minute of their day and often saw assignments as intrusions upon their non-academic selves.

But not all the students were steeped in such "adult" concerns. The second type of student was directly out of (or within a year or two from) high school. They were the ones trying college--giving it a go because all other options seemed less palatable, more expensive, or more painful. Because Gordon costs significantly less per semester hour than nearby universities,[4] many students were making it a testing ground before jumping into a half-hearted, and more costly, academic venture. One student explained that he was attending Gordon "to get [his] mother off [his] back" and that "couch- potato-ing was not cutting it." For this type, college was a mere distraction, and a ruse "for the 'rents."

Still other students, my third type, had come to Gordon to "start life over": to get out of manual labor because of health reasons, to get out of a house filled with kids, to get out of a dead-end job, to get a "direction" after getting off drugs, to get off the streets, or even to "set an example" for their kids. This type of student seemed to have a general apprehension about school. Most of them had not previously succeeded in school and so were leery about anything which sounded, tasted or smelled slightly academic.

The fourth type of student was "on the lamb" (running from student-ness at other institutions). These students had previously tried higher education at another institution (usually a university) but were intimidated, bemused, or annoyed by the experience. In an introductory essay assignment (which asked them to tell a story about their decision to attend Gordon), many students explained their fear and loathing of the larger university classes, their feelings of displacement at being away from home, or their feelings of displacement at being a commuter student on a residential university campus.

What was similar about all of these stories was that they illustrate a kind of dislocation---a sense of unease. My students felt as though they did not necessarily belong at school; they felt no resonance between themselves and their surroundings. Their resistance, or avoidance, seemed substantiated not so much by an *underlife*[5] (as the Smith Junior High students), but by an *otherlife*, that is, the lives each of them were leading outside of, in addition to, and at the demise of, academic objectives.[6] Whether they were the "starting over" type or the get-me-the-hell-out-of-my-parents'-house type, most of my students were uneasy about being in an academic place. Especially in my Composition 111[7] courses, students seemed to have a finger on the student eject button...just in case. Their own apprehension about student-ness was keeping them from engaging their

surroundings--their peers, their instructors, their assignments, and even the most basic or essential behaviors necessary for academic survival. And although the discourse of student resistance was not as flagrant as it was at Smith Junior High, the avoidance of writing was a ghost-like presence in every class session.

As I described earlier, the Smith Junior High students publicly contested being prompted into writing. But in addition to this anti-writing posture, my students at Gordon Community College were on an ideological fence: They were at college "voluntarily" because they believed a post-secondary degree would propel them out of or away from a certain material existence. But, for the most part, they were also situated, to some degree, in that existence. So the tug and pull of entering an academic writerly existence, and an academic writerly place, was more complicated than a contest of social/academic, student/teacher binaries. The students, themselves, were locations of an ideological and philosophical tension.

A Postmodern Problem?

Early in my experience at Gordon I characterized my students, and the entire set of pedagogical circumstances, as postmodern. In so doing, I was recalling one of my graduate professors who described the most profound crisis in higher education as the dissonance between the "modern academy" and the "postmodern student." I assumed she was referring to the

increasing rift between the kind of life one leads within the climate of a traditional university and in the culture outside of academia.[8] In other words, what is privileged in academia is not necessarily privileged in non-academic, commercial culture. While the modernist academy values one set of assumptions and behaviors, the culture at large values others.

Of course, the values of the "modern academy" are shrouded in uncertainty--and filled with contention. Linda Brodkey's essay, "Modernism and the Scene(s) of Writing," has been one of the most valuable texts in revealing specific "modern" inclinations of academic life, and explaining how they translate into college writing. For Brodkey, and for my purposes, modernity is marked by the image of a stationary, solitary writer that expresses the "romance of solitude" and the self-present generative mind.[9] The image of academic life and academic corsciousness is stable, quiet, controlled, reflexive...and productive in that the human subject makes a record of his/her thoughts. Contrary to this is the increasingly fragmented consciousness of non-academic, consumerist, postmodern culture.

In Lester Faigley's book on composition studies and the postmodern, Fragments of Rationality, he explains that the postmodern, if it can be characterized at all, is expressed as a disintegration of a stable reality, thus of a coherent daily existence, and a coherent consciousness. It is a

"growing awareness of randomness, ambiguity, and chaos;" or in Don DeLillo's terms, it is the increasing loss of a "`manageable reality.'"[10] For many theorists, including Faigley, daily life in late twentieth-century America, amidst the constant barrage of advertisements and media-driven images, leads to a form of schizophrenia. Faigley likens postmodern consciousness to watching t.v.:

> The experience of flipping across television programming approximates the consciousness of the schizophrenic living in the intense, eternal present. The viewer watches a series of spectacles from around the world--"smart" bombs exploding buildings, sports heroes in the elation of victory, royal marriages, plane crashes, assassinations, rock concerts, ranting dictators, shuttle launches, hurricanes, scandals, earthquakes, revolutions, eclipses, international terrorism--all issued in an economy competing for attention.[11]

What's most important about this description of postmodern consciousness is that it is contrary to what is privileged in traditional academic, modern, consciousness. That is, the postmodern human subject watches; it is passive. The academic consciousness writes; it is active. The postmodern subject is fleeting, unfocused. The academic consciousness

is constant and still.[12]

Even if I accept these characterizations only partially, the implications are significant for understanding my students at Gordon Community College. For them, academic life and non-academic life seemed always at odds. It seemed often (as I note at the outset of this chapter) that students were experiencing some degree of culture shock at every turn. And at a physiological level, my students were experiencing the disintegration of their identities; they were being pulled apart by the centrifugal forces of academia, work and family. Their lives seemed defined by a host of contradictory discourses pulling them willy nilly through their weeks: They were compelled to get a degree in order to make more money, but were at odds with school because it took time away from work and pay. They wanted to get a degree in order to make things better for their families but were uncomfortable with school taking time from their families. School, then, seemed for most a no-place which, theoretically, could provide for a better future, but which was, practically, splintering their present. In class, these students seemed detached, disconnected from one another and from their surroundings, on a quasi-intellectual errand slightly more important than picking up milk but less important than picking up the kids from daycare or school.

Attempting to understand a similar situation, Lee Ann Carroll casts a pedagogical problem as one of postmodern

fragmentation. In "Pomo Blues: Stories from First Year Composition," she says her first-year college composition students also experienced tension among the discourses of their lives, primarily between the academic and non-academic.[13] Like my students, hers were "cynical, bored, alienated from community, education, and their own experience..."[14] But unlike my students, her students had some degree of success. They were able to explore the difference between academic and non-academic discourses; they "problematized" their own drafts; they deconstructed narratives about themselves, and "testified" about their new understandings.

However, my students were illustrating for me the fragmented, disoriented, discomposed subject. Theirs was a language of posturing, stalling, anti-writing, and silence. For the most part, my students didn't want to "problematize," or even change, their drafts. They didn't "testify" anything in their papers, or about the writing process. In fact, most of them were having such a difficult time simply "doing school" (a phrase both Carroll and I both use) that such in-depth involvement with a single text or piece of writing seemed impossible.

All of this is not to sound completely tragic. Class sessions were not altogether abysmal. In fact, in many classes we had engaging discussions about readings, and a few students even managed to "get something" from workshops.

Several students in each class explained they had never had so much supportive guidance and specific comments about their writing (largely due to my teacherly/readerly commentary on drafts.) But even when classes went "well," when we all read an essay closely and debated somewhat earnestly, something was missing. The momentum from good class sessions did not translate into my students' writing assignments. The discursive energy of the class, the stuff that invents positions in a debate, was not being carried over to their drafts, or even carried out of that particular class session. When the bell rang (so to speak), whatever was happening stopped and the centrifugal forces of their otherlives sucked them out of the academic vacuum.

A Problem of Presence?

No matter how I defined or described the problems in my composition classes, they were self-perpetuating. Because students were scattered by the centrifugal forces of their lives or by their tentative posture toward academia, the classroom experience was not real and immediate, or in Chaim Perelman's understanding, "present."[15] As he explains, "What is present for us is foremost in our minds and important to us. Curiously, what loses in importance becomes abstract, almost nonexistent."[16] For my students, their peers, their instructor, their own writing and reading were not present; all of the elements of school were abstract, almost

nonexistent, a pile of bi-weekly distractions.

Occasionally, I could attract their attention long enough for a good discussion, but even after such a moment, writing assignments still echoed the students' tentative investment in academic subject matter. Anti-writing was standard currency. Outside of a few students in each class, the writing was not only "about nothing and addressed to no one;" it was also consistently shorter than assignment requirements. In short, the writing was largely representative of the discourse and climate of the classroom--brief, tentative, and uninvolved.

Students seemed as though they were merely attempting to fulfill form requirements without actually creating a present, writerly, "I."[17] Before drafts were to be turned in, their non-presence was always most exasperating (for both them and me). During a typical conference, students' lack of agency, and involvement would be most apparent:

Me: So, how's it [the paper] coming?
Student: Pretty good, I guess.
Me: What's your thesis?
Student: What do you mean?
Me: What are you arguing? What position are you taking?
Student: Well, I'm talking about malls.[18]
Me: OK, what's your point about malls?
Student: I'm talking about all the things to do in malls.
Me: OK, so you're telling us that malls are good? That they are good for kids?
Student: ...I don't know.
Me: Remember our debate?
Student: Yes.
Me: Some people said we should blame shopping malls for materialism, and for making children materialistic. Why were some people in the class so upset about the time kids spend

in malls?
Student: I don't know. I think malls are OK.
Me: Why?
Student: I don't know. Can't you just tell me what you want?

This final plea ("can't you just tell me what you want?"), this final bow out of the conference, out of the paper, out of the goings-on of the class, came often. In fact, the question was put to me so often that I found myself proclaiming to entire classes, "The only thing I want is for YOU to want something!" What I really meant, of course, is that I wanted them *to want to say something* in their papers.

However, most of my students were left disorientated and dis-composed.[19] It seemed as though many of them avoided taking a position on any topic we could conjure up. From guns to sex, from school to work, from home to homework, no topic in the world seemed to get the majority of students to materialize--to manifest themselves as real people, in a real place, with real ideas, rather than as floating student apparitions.

It is no surprise, says Jasper Neel. In Plato, Derrida, and Writing, Neel explains the entry into college composition as "a play of absences."[20] In Neel's dismal rendering of first-year college composition, students like mine

> ...bring to their texts a radically oversimplified belief that writing should convey the knowledge that exists outside of and prior to writing. Because they can never find that knowledge, their texts never really begin; thus, what occurs in their texts is a lost voice crying to know itself. Such writers never get to the point of trying to write. They never get past the theological assumption that *what to write* will take care of the writing itself once they know *what to write*.[21]

In other words, such students wait outside of writing, trying to think of something to write, while not realizing that they are waiting for nothing, for absence. (And, as I'll explain later, the distressing matter for me here is that my pedagogical strategy not only perpetuated but also rested upon that "oversimplified belief" about pre-textual knowledge.)

From Neel's[22] perspective, an even more dubious problem is that the meaning-making processes which accompany writing are distinct and separate from pre-textual or non-textual "reality"--the experiential continuum where students work, eat, drive, and recreate. So, for students "to participate in writing at all, they must cease participating in life's continuing `events.'"[23] That is, they must submit to a new set of assumptions (about writing, texts, and reading) so

that they may even understand the play among written academic texts; and in so doing, they must, themselves, recognize that they are written. As Neel explains,

> ...novices who enter writing give up knowledge of themselves. In return for this sacrifice, they get writing. To be sure, writing promises truth, but all the while writing defers truth in order to keep the promise, and not its fulfillment, in operation. Students learn quickly that the process of writing wreaks havoc with what they are trying to use writing to represent. And they learn just as quickly that they can protect both themselves and their closed belief systems by keeping them free of writing. The moment something "belongs" to them gets into the world of writing it's lost.[24]

In other words, my students who would plead, "Can't you just tell me what you want?" could have been protecting themselves--attempting not to disclose, not to disrupt, the beliefs and assumptions which had been safely out of writing's way for years. They resisted proclaiming "this is what I think," or even constructing a position amidst others, because such an act would have opened them to analysis, to the kind of perusing which gets done to written texts, not people.

Also, according to Neel's perspective, the act of writing is situated in (and situates students into) a very particular metaphysical realm, one profoundly different from the metaphysics of daily life outside of college composition. In other words, my first-year composition students were not only experiencing a new set of physical relationships (with instructors and peers) but were also encountering a new metaphysical apparatus (discourses, texts, and assumptions about how such things operate). College composition class for them may well have been a place where writing gets done, but it may also have been a place where their identities were coming undone.

The "Go Out and Find" Prompt

By the end of my first semester, spring 1997, I realized I needed some fundamentally different strategy for inviting students into academic writing. I understood that they needed social and intellectual stimulation that would compel them into a new, and somewhat disorienting, set of assumptions and intellectual practices. I wanted them to know that they could create a writerly presence, that they could learn how to invent valuable ideas in an academic setting if given the appropriate situation. My problem, then, was creating that appropriate pedagogical situation.

Looking back over my field notes taken at Smith Junior High, I re-applied some old theoretical apparatus in order to

get my students writing about their non-academic lives, that is, exploring those layers of social involvement which constituted their lives outside of school: their family, friends, work relationships. (At the time, I was referring to such a strategy as a "pedagogy of involvement.") After all, it seemed to me that my students were (always and already) invested in something/somewhere outside of the classroom, outside of the practices of reading and writing for school. So I decided that I would respond to the de-centered students in front of me with a de-centered classroom.

On the first day of the fall 1997 semester (my second semester at Gordon), I explained my strategy to the apprehensive, furrow-browed classes in front of me. I told them that we would use the composition class as a tool for exploring their interests; they would be responsible for exploring topics, bringing ideas to class, and, ultimately, teaching their peers (and instructor) about their findings. My assumption with this approach was that students' primary problem was one of invention, that they needed help generating discourse about a chosen topic. The processes of drafting, revising, and editing, I figured, would come more easily if they could write about something in which they were genuinely interested. ("Genuine," for me and probably to a host of composition instructors, meant that the students were somehow involved with a topic before coming to the

composition class.)

At the beginning the fall 1997 semester, my Composition 111 classes undertook an investigation essay. They were all to investigate their chosen academic major or career choice. A portion of the prompt follows:

> As noted in class, the next assignment is an investigating essay. This week, you should begin investigating your chosen career or field. (If you are undecided about a field, I suggest looking into one that interests you, to some degree, or coming to speak with me immediately.) It is my hope that this assignment will help you understand the nuances of your field. Below are some questions that should get you started:
>
> 1. Who does the field serve?
> 2. What are the qualifications needed to work in the field?
> 3. What are the skills (or the body of knowledge) needed to work and succeed in the field?
> 4. What is necessary to become an asset (a valued contributor) in the field?
> 5. What forces/institutions/groups/inventions cause (or have caused) the field to change or evolve?
> 6. How has the field changed over the past five to ten years?
> 7. What are the major debates (political, economic, policy, philosophical) in the field?
> 8. What do people in the field think about its present state or direction?
> 9. On what groups/organizations does the field depend?
> 10. What other fields/careers depend on this field?
>
> Certainly, you will not be able to write at length about all of these issues. Therefore, as you begin investigating, you should consider which questions/issues are most relevant for you -- and the nature of your field. You will need to use two types of sources for your investigation:
>
> 1. Interview(s): You should get the interview underway as soon as possible. Speak with someone in the field (and/or someone who teaches in the field). You might request an interview from a co-worker, an instructor, or even a friend that works in the field. (Make sure to follow the interview guidelines on p.233 of PH.)
> 2. Written Published Text(s): I might suggest a textbook on the field. Or, you might look into a journal (at the library) to see the major trends and discussions.

In each of my two Composition 111 courses, the students and I collaborated on the above research questions. After using the questions to gather information, and generate ideas, students were to develop a thesis based on one or two of the questions. At first, most of the students seemed to like the assignment (perhaps because they participated in its

creation). However, the majority of the students lost interest early in the writing process. They brought in little or no written texts for workshopping; most even failed to bring in field notes.

The prompt had failed. It was designed to elicit student interest and seemed, instead, to de-spirit the class early in the semester. The problem with the prompt may have been one of invention--or lack thereof. In designing the prompt, I had assumed that the students' chosen topics, their fields of study, automatically create writing topics. This is/was not the case. I discovered that simply because a student has chosen to major in, say, Nursing, does not mean s/he will know how to invent a position and a set of points about that field and within that discourse. For the investigative assignment, many of the students could tell a bit about their academic majors, but few could develop a thesis or make connections between points, or between sources. Few understood that people in their fields have significance beyond just doing something--that their jobs and responsibilities have meaning for and impact on a larger community. And even though I asked the students to make mention of such issues, their papers turned out to be little more than dictionary definitions of their fields.

"Go out and find" prompts, such as mine, are rampant in composition courses; they come in the form of the "I-search" paper and as the standard remembering essay (which most often

suggests something like, "Go back home and think about your life and write about something interesting"). The problem, of course, is that most students don't know when something is interesting to an academic audience. And even if they are told that a moment of, say, sexual discovery, is interesting, they don't know why.

The logic, here, is that students should "go back" to their own lives to find/make meaning for their academic writing. So while the students need help making meaning in an academic space, the prompt invites them out of that space. It sends them "back" to their own lives while hoping (or assuming) that they will, somehow, know how to make meaning, and even how to make something interesting, for an academic audience.

My students, who desperately needed to be involved in a discourse (or participate in the invention of one), were instead prompted to make one of their own. This critique of my own prompt resonates with Richard Ohmann's critique of writing textbooks in English in America. In his section about "finding something to say," Ohmann explains how most texts tend toward "individuating" students, how they invite the student to explore her/his personal beliefs and ideas without offering a discourse of invention, or a community to provide that discourse. These prompts "lack...organic connection between the student's warehouse of experiences and ideas and her choices of action at the present moment."[25]

For Ohmann, this gap between students' entire past and their actual present (the classroom, the assignment) helps to alienate the student from others, from her/himself, and from her/his own labor.

In the following passage, Ohmann explains the process of invention in writing texts, which, for me, helps to illustrate the "lack of organic connection[s]" in writing assignments such as my own:

> Fully to appreciate how these books handle the topic of invention, notice one other oddity in standard operating procedure: every book that systematically addresses the question of acquiring something to say tells the student first to find a topic and then derive the thesis. So natural is this order to a situation in which people write at other people's bidding, that its oddity only appears when you widen the context. But do so, and the priority vanishes. People have concerns, needs, impulses to celebrate or condemn, to compact with others or to draw battle lines against them, to explain, appeal, exhort, justify, criticize. Such concerns, needs, and impulses are what lead people to write (and to speak), when they are not writing to measure. And such concerns are much more like theses than like topics. Unalienated writing *begins* in the feeling

> and belief that rise out of one's life and tries to concentrate them--perhaps by "narrowing the topic," among many other ways. Textbook writing begins in the nowhere of the assignment, moves into the unbordered regions of the student's accumulated experiences, settles on one region--the topic--and *then* looks around for feelings and beliefs to affix that topic, with supporting details to be added afterward.[26]

I assume that Ohmann would offer a similar critique of my prompt. Although my prompt offered students a specific place to begin, and even provided some agency for real and immediate exploration, it lacked impulse (Ohmann's term). In other words, my assignment did not conjure "feeling and belief" from the students' lives. Nor did it capitalize on students' present situation with others in the class. It was largely about the "unbordered regions" of each student's academic path, which had, at that point in their career, just barely begun. And, perhaps, most profoundly, the prompt bungled in that it offered students *no place* to begin--other than some "where" "out there" in their lives.

Out Standing in Their Fields

I would like to narrate one last pedagogical stumble in this chapter. It is the story (or one of many narrative

renditions) of my Composition 112[27] course in the fall of 1997. It was my second semester at Gordon and I was attempting, as I explained above, to de-center the composition classes. Accordingly, I decided that students should use the course as an in-depth look at their chosen academic fields (as in the investigation paper for Composition 111). Throughout the semester, I prompted students to "go into their fields" and discover how claims are made and defended. I assumed that by reading and interacting with texts of their own choosing, they would be more focused on their labor. As the semester progressed, class sessions functioned as centers for discussing research methods, argument strategies, and different forms. Occasionally, we would have "tell-us-how-it's-going" discussions in which everyone explained some "interesting" tidbit they had discovered about their field. The process translated well into their explanatory papers, in which students had only to explain some debate (professional, financial, theoretical, institutional) in their field. Many students voiced their satisfaction with the course at that (halfway) point in the semester.

But things started to get a bit more complicated toward the end of the term when students began assembling their final argumentative research papers. Class sessions became sparsely attended. Students complained that they did not understand how they could "take a stand" (and develop an

argument) with their topics. They asked repeatedly, "how are we supposed to argue something like this?" While I was prompting them to develop argumentative positions in their "fields of interest" or academic majors, they were not only struggling with the idea of an argumentative position, but also with the topic itself. In response, I brought in examples from journals and magazines of authors debating issues in different disciplines. And despite abundant handouts, and stacks of examples, most students were confused, and almost all lost energy and focus. Only a small number of students in both classes found the experience rewarding. These were the students who had already been steeped in their field, who had been "out there" in the profession to some degree. For example, one student in agriculture characterized the experience as the best English course he'd ever taken--primarily because he was able (and invited) to explore what he wanted, farming. He had never been invited to talk about farming in a humanities class (and he often complained to me about the stuffy and arcane nature of his "other" humanities-type classes). He enjoyed discussing his findings so much in class that the other students openly referred to him as "corn boy." (He and I both considered it a small success.)

Looking back on that semester, I can point to numerous mistakes on my part. Perhaps the most profound pedagogical bungle was related to my assumptions about students'

understanding of and familiarity with academic discourses. I asked them to perform the language of their field, but they did not have that language, and so did not understand how to generate a position using it. At that point in their academic careers, most of them had only recently decided that they wanted to explore a specific field, that they wanted, for instance, to be a nurse or an engineer, so they had not yet acquired the generative intellectual tools of that field--the contention between different practices, the debates about different theoretical inclinations, etc. And to confound their disorientation, our class sessions were not providing the students with an active, immediate and animated (or animating) community that might have helped them develop those tools. In Ohmann's words, I had sent them to the "nowhere of [an] assignment."

I asked them to read through journals or, perhaps, interview a person in their field of study, but this was only a cursory interaction, primarily of written text. It was not dialogic interaction[25] with flesh and blood interlocutors; it was not "real-life" animated discussion, that which offers cues and hints on how to take a stand, create a posture, and lean into a debate. In short, I was assuming that textuality had all the power that a dialogic community would have in creating a discourse.

Also my strategy did not take into account the subject position of the students--who, at that point, were primarily

pre-academic or pre-professional thinkers. That is, they were not approaching their fields as, say, graduate students steeped in the processes of discovering the histories, philosophies and politics of their chosen field. Instead, they had merely made some decision to get a degree in a potentially "interesting" career. Of course, this is not to undercut their intellectual/discursive development, but merely to point out their need for increased familiarity with the discourses of their fields.

A Place Problem?

My blunder of that ill-fated semester was that I assumed students could form an academic subject position without the inter-animating forces of *real voices in real space and time*. I did not, for instance, have class sessions in which we read and debated the pay scale in nursing or the new EPA standards for Round Up-Ready seed. Ironically, in attempting to make the class more student-centered, I made it more text-centered, in which the few journal articles the students found, and sample papers I offered, were to be the students' only guides for establishing an "interesting" argument.[29]

I had forgotten my training in classical rhetoric, which emphasizes the ways discourse emerges from specific moments and situations. I had forgotten definitions such as John Poulakos': "Rhetoric is the art which seeks to capture

in opportune moments that which is appropriate and attempts to suggest that which is possible."[30] This is a sophistic definition of rhetoric, one that depends upon sophistic notions of *kairos* (the opportune moment), *to prepon* (the appropriate) and *to dynaton* (the possible). At the center of this definition is situation, a particular moment in time and space in which rhetor/audience/discourse intersect. There is no text, no single discursive thing that can exist outside the contingencies of the situation (those elements that establish what discourse is appropriate, what moment is opportune, and what actions are possible). This is significant for a composition class and/or an assignment because it suggests that writing, if it is to be considered rhetorical, emerges from a situation, a happening, rather than a stack of model texts. It suggests *that the purpose for saying a particular thing is rooted in the on-going state of affairs in a particular place.* Certainly, a "state of affairs" could include a stack of written texts (be they journal articles, assignment prompts, model essay, or declarations of war). However, the practices of sophistic rhetoric would suggest that written texts are, or any single utterance is, animated and re-animated by real and immediate people engaged in dialogue with and about those texts.

In "Kairos: A Neglected Concept," James Kinneavy explains that the "opportune moment" (kairos) was once at the heart of rhetorical study. He points out that discourse

for Gorgias, the pre-Socratic rhetorician, "'arises from external things impinging upon us.'"[31] And, as Scott Consigny explains, in Gorgian rhetoric, formal qualities of discourse itself are governed not by universal notions of a good discourse but by the specific modes of inquiry and presentation sanctioned in a given context:

> [T]o Gorgias, the rhetor does not first compose his speech using a previously established method of inquiry , such as dialectic, and then subsequently present the truths resulting from that inquiry using superficial variations of "style." Nor does he simply embellish the arguments he has constructed according to "legitimate" rules of deduction or induction with superficial figurative ornaments. Rather the Gorgian [or, Gordonian, for that matter] rhetor must accede fully to the operative protocols of reasoning and speaking of specific discourses; for if he does not abide by its etiquette and use its sanctioned apparatus, he will be unable to prevail in those contexts constituted and informed by that discourse.[32]

So, not only does the moment provide purpose and direction; it also establishes a mode of inquiry or invention. Thus, in Gorgian or sophistic rhetoric, the opportune moment is,

itself, a context out of which speaking/writing emerges. The context, or situation, is constituted by a tradition of discursive practices.

From a Gorgian perspective, then, my composition students were being prompted into a rather unsophistic-ated rhetorical position: to compose without first acceding "fully to the operative protocols of reasoning and speaking [and writing] of specific discourses." The student/rhetors in my classes (and perhaps in most first-year college courses) had no "previously established method of inquiry" (no substantial practice with the discourse) that would have helped them develop text--or, for that matter, to develop an interest in generating something to say. They needed to experience the look, sound, and feel of an inquiry before generating and developing texts that would emerge as a result of that inquiry.

My error was in sending them "out there" into the world to discover an academic mode of inquiry. I had hoped that they would find a place to begin writing, and I assumed that those places where they worked, lived, and practiced daily life would elicit something (academic) to say--would act as generative contexts for their assignments. My assumptions, however, led my students into the "nowhere" of assignments (Ohmann's terminology), into a quasi-place that offered no real or immediate responses, no social dynamics, no *kairos*.[22]

What I have illustrated is a pedagogical situation in

which students lacked real and immediate interaction with others, in which interaction was merely cursory discussion across fields of study, in which the course material lacked presence for those first entering their field of study. The material was, for many of them, a tiresome mound of abstractions. I had attempted to appeal to the students' apprehensive posture, to their tentative approach to academic work, by de-emphasizing the classroom itself. I believed that emphasizing their own supposed interests and minimizing the actual academic place (that is, the place which embodies, for them, academic interests) would invigorate them. But the students needed the emphasis on a real place, a *where* in which they could conjure up a sense of who-to-be and how-to-think.

[1] Stephen Spender, qtd. in Perelman, 36.

[2] To protect the students, teachers, and administrators, the name of this school has been changed.

[3] Of course, I understand that categorizing students is a rather blasphemous undertaking, but in assessing my own abilities as a teacher, I had to also make sense of this diverse body of students--more diverse in age, ethnicity, social class, and writing proficiency than any other group of students I had previously taught.

[4] Prices per credit hour: $79.00 at Gordon Community College, $204.00 and $173.57 at the two closest universities.

[5] Brooks' notion of *underlife* is explained in the introduction.

[6] Certainly in using the term *otherlife*, I am walking a dangerous path by suggesting that academia is an existential center and that non-academic experience is outside of--or other than--that center. But I want to push on that metaphor in this chapter (and throughout the dissertation) to illustrate the dynamics working at Gordon Community College--how students come to and go away from the campus, and what that movement portends for writing pedagogy.

[7] Composition 111 is the first course in a required two-semester composition sequence at the college. Three different developmental composition courses are offered for students who need assistance before entering the 111/112 sequence. See Appendix A for course descriptions.

[8] Of couurse, any discussion of broad cultural inclinations depends, to a large degree, on crass generalization. As with most discussions on postmodernity and modernity, I must discuss academia and life in what Michel de Certeau calls "quotidian" culture as having trends, characteristics, or inclinations. What's interesting, or especially complicated, about such semantics is that the discourses of the postmodern most often denounce making generalizations about a "culture" or any system. Also, although my use of the terms, "modern" and "postmodern," might seem to indicate two separate and identifiable sets of behaviors/ideas/discourses, it is important not to see them as (completely) mutually exclusive. It is best, I think, to see certain inclinations, which emerge from similar cultural trends, as being somewhat at odds. As Raymie Mckerrow explained, in lecture on postmodernity, it is most valuable to see not so much the stark differences between the modern/postmodern paradigms but to see the ways that components of those paradigms seem to co-exist in practice. In this way, he says, postmodern and modern discourses might represent a "constellation" in which some points are more "modern" and others "postmodern."

[9] Brodkey, 401.

[10] Faigley, Fragments, 3.

[11] Faigley, Fragments, 13.

[12] Here, *subject* refers to a post-structuralist understanding of human individual--as animated by discourses. *Consciousness* aligns more appropriately with the modern sensibility of an *a priori* coherent identity.

[13] Carroll, 923.

[14] Carroll, 931.

[15] To apply Perelman's understanding of presence here, I am assuming that a teacher (or even the academic department or institution) is rhetor, and that the rhetorical objective is to make the material, the texts, the practice of writing, in fact, the entire classroom experience, real and immediate to the students.

[16] Perelman, 36.

[17] In chapters two and four, I'll explain, in more detail, the tension between students' longing to remain outside of writing (and thus maintain certain assumptions about their identities and the surroundings) and to become steeped in the recursive processes of writing.

[18] Paper topics emerged from class readings and discussion. After reading, analyzing, and debating several essays (from a common reader), students were given options on topics. Students would often migrate to those topics which generated the most heated or most lengthy in-class debates. This particular topic emerged from a discussion about shopping malls, children, and materialism.

[19] I mean to suggest, here, that students were left without the desire/will to write, to generate something to say. Later, in chapter four, I'll liken this to a more general lack of agency.

[20] Neel, Plato, Derrida, and Writing, 127.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Neel's position, in these passages, is informed by Jacques Derrida's post-structuralist notion of *presence*.

[23] Ibid., 132.

[24] Ibid., 133.

[25] Ohmann, English, 152.

[26] Ibid, 153.

[27] The Composition 112 course requires students to complete an eight-to-ten page research paper, along with four other (preceding) papers. The course differs from Composition 111 primarily in that it emphasizes argumentation and intertextuality. That is, in the second course of the sequence, students are to interact more closely and critically with published written texts, and to generate arguments that emerge from that interaction.

[28] Here, I am evoking Mikhail Bakhtin and the school of dialogic thought and action. See Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics and The Dailogic Imagination.

[29] Also, my own position, as an academic, kept me from entering the students' discourses. That is, my own subject position was a shortcoming.

[30] Poulakos, 36.

[31] Kinneavy, 24.

[32] Consigny, 286-7.

CHAPTER TWO
"LIVING IN [THEIR] NOWHERE LAND": A COLLEGE-WIDE INQUIRY

> "One way to put into focus the perhaps insoluble contradictions facing politically conscious instructors is to consider the struggle over the meaning and status of the writer, or the writing subject, in English studies, especially in rhetoric and composition."
>
> John Clifford[1]

> "They're too tired; they don't have time. They don't care about this class because it's just a lousy requirement they have to get through in order to get to what they're really interested in...and they're just not going to put the time in it. I wish I could find a way to inspire them to want to do the process, and I don't know how to do that."
>
> Karen, Gordon Community College Instructor[2]

Like my colleagues at Gordon Community College, and perhaps most budding scholars/teachers attracted to the culture of academic life, I had spent many years on university campuses (nine and a half) before leaving for my first full-time teaching position. Having logged hundreds of hours in student unions as a graduate student (sipping coffee, talking theory, posturing politely), I had become somewhat accustomed to large groups of students talking, studying, drinking, and eating together. I had come to associate academic space with communal, or at least gregarious, activity.

However, from the first morning at Gordon Community College, even before getting out of the car, some of my basic assumptions about college students, and college space, would

be challenged. Of course, I expected certain changes: students would not be filing down the sidewalks from the dorms; the lawns would not be filled with Greek life announcements or sideshows; the main courtyard wouldn't have an evangelical preacher trying to save passers-by. But what I did not expect at Gordon was the isolation. Rather than groups of students walking or sitting casually, I saw students waiting alone in cars for their classes. They were cut off from one another, sealed up in their own morning, staring ahead, sipping coffee or Mountain Dew, and listening to the radio.

Before pulling into Gordon that first morning, I had assumed most college students, to some degree, experience a certain college "vibe," an involvement in a climate of student-ness. But at Gordon, students seemed unsituated in the institution. They were, somehow, *non-orientated*, as though student orientation, the official set of processes by which an institution begins to make non-academic people into students, was not achieving its objective. This is not to say that those offices in charge of such processes were performing inadequately. In fact, as I believe this chapter will illustrate, no particular office or department could necessarily oversee the complexities of orienting students into academic space; the processes of such an orientation would have needed to involve not only the geography of that particular space (or campus) but also the geopolitics of the

culture surrounding that space. This chapter, then, explains how composition courses at Gordon Community College worked to create a particular sense of place for students (and instructors).

The Where's and The Who's

Gordon is not like a traditional university environment. Its buildings do not pose, or impose, as monuments to higher learning; they do not convey solemn reverence to the classical tradition of university architecture, with ornate columns and lofty towers. Many of Gordon's buildings are small, and only two or three stories high. The campus has very little lawn space, so its open grounds are primarily parking lots and small paved roadways. It is surrounded by a large industrial complex, what has become known as "the golden triangle" of growing industry in the metropolitan area. The north and east borders of campus are framed by railroad tracks, and the west by the regional vocational high school.

Contrary to a traditional university setting, where students and faculty both occupy and define academic space, the Gordon campus is defined, exclusively, by faculty and administration. While the relatively small number of full-time faculty have ample office space, to decorate with posters of literary greats, philosophical quotations, and Romantic verse, students have no place to establish, to

settle or define. They have no dorm rooms, no student lounge (other than vending areas or the main cafeteria), no "spirit rock," no mall, no communal lawn or park. In the center of College Hall, Com/Hum instructors work amidst their stylized lamps, fern plants, and framed Yeats musings, while students read their assignments eating a bag of potato chips by the ATM machine. In short, students do not have a place at Gordon, other than classrooms. And because attendance tends to be erratic, the classes constantly shift character and so rarely took on a sense of place. However, the instructors reside in a particular place, define it as their own (or in association with their own conceptions of academia).

Until very recently, in fact, Gordon Community College was seen by its faculty, administration and supporting community as an element of its surrounding corporate/industrial complex. Before 1995, when Gordon changed from a technical school to a community college, its programs and departments were geared, primarily, for training and then guiding students into technical positions for local industry and agriculture. (Two of the largest buildings on campus, Engineering Technologies and Industrial Technologies, stood, and still stand, as testament to Gordon's primary purpose within the community.) Even though vestiges of the technical school remained, the school began to change in 1995. It began attracting legions of new students who had

recently graduated from high school or vocational school and were "trying college" for the first time. Enrollment climbed steadily, largely due to this younger, eighteen to twenty-five year old, cadre of students.

During the early stages of this shift from technical school to community college, both faculty and administration were disorientated by the demographics of the in-coming students. They were younger than the traditional Gordon students and in general they seemed, to the Communications/Humanities (Com/Hum) writing faculty, less focused on a particular educational objective (such as a specific technical degree or certificate).[3] In response to the influx of these new students, small groups of instructors formed special committees to analyze student demographics; administrators invited guest speakers to elucidate the characteristics of the enigmatic "generation X"; departments re-wrote their objectives; and individual instructors revised their pedagogical goals. Perhaps the most telling sign of the institutional turmoil was that the most raucous, crowded tables in the cafeteria were surrounded by instructors, not students, chattering about their classes. It was an environment of wringing hands, shaking heads, and shifting pedagogies. Hallways and offices were filled with anecdotes about the younger cadre of students, their outrageous demands, needs, and antics.

Instructors often characterized their younger students

as flagrantly non-academic, as embodiments of a commercial, fast-food, shopping mall, give-it-to-me-now culture. To most of the Com/Hum instructors, their younger students were cogs in the machinery of mainstream commercial culture. Cassandra, for example, characterized her younger students as intellectually passive, as victims of "a consumer mentality" which kept them "from wanting to learn." According to Cassandra, her students believed that a good-paying job would ultimately make them "better people," and that a college education would merely be a step in achieving that goal. Another instructor, Fredric, pointed to the Gordon Community College parking lots--where faculty automobiles seemed significantly less plush than those of students--as evidence of students' over-zealous participation in the culture of consumption. As yet another instructor, Lewis, explained, "the problem with the new students--18 or 19, very employed, blowers off of high school--is that they love that culture that is destroying them through its language."

While these younger, consumer-oriented students were increasing in number at Gordon, the traditional "non-traditional" (twenty-five and above) Gordon students were still occupying classrooms as well. And the mix between the younger and older students simply emphasized, for many instructors, the characteristics and eccentricities of each group. As one faculty member, Lewis, explained, "the non-traditional student (usually middle age and female)" had a

more complicated sense of her various roles in life, and her agency as a student. Such students had some understanding that they could remove themselves from the grind of daily life and critique its offerings. They also had a more profound, or at least more perceptible, sense of mission; they understood that they might avoid future hardships by completing a degree, and how a particular course might figure into their broader academic objectives. Such students had come from what one instructor, Cassandra, called "failed circumstances." Many of them were in transition out of bad jobs and/or bad marriages. Or, as another instructor, Karen, explained, many of them were "starting over" after ten or twenty years of bad choices and unfortunate consequences.

Although most instructors made some form of distinction between the qualities of their younger and older students, they also commented on general characteristics of the entire student population. Lewis explained,

> I think they are the same in that almost all of the students are typical products of the culture at large, typically suspicious of writing, learning and art, typically intimidated by both the subject and the person presenting that subject (me).[4]

Lewis sensed in his students a clear divide between academic life and mainstream everyday living, between "out there" and

"in here." This perception echoed in the sentiments of all the Com/Hum instructors that I interviewed. The problem, as they perceived it, was that life "out there" was in constant tension with life "in here," intellectually, ideologically, physically and metaphysically. The consequence of that tension was students' lack of intellectual investment in the courses. All the instructors that I spoke with described their students, to some degree, as uninvolved, uninterested, and unmotivated, and most blamed their students' domestic, work, and recreational commitments--those elements which provided centrifugal force away from the academic institution.

In fact, it seemed that the Gordon students were everywhere except in the academic institution. They were not the traditional college pupils who had left behind a small town identity in search of "the college experience." They were not coming to campus to live "the college life," to invest their identities in the post-parent world of free thinking, free drinking, and free love. Instead, it seemed as though they were merely passing through campus on their way through pay periods. As Karen explained, her students at Gordon were "hugely" different from the university students she taught as a graduate student:

> ...almost all our [Gordon] students are parents. I mean, how can I sit here and say, 'you have to have

> this composition done,' when somebody's like...`my kid was in the hospital.' I mean come on. So their lives have other planes that are much bigger than college. And this wasn't the case at [two state universities] where most of my students were eighteen years old, just out of high school...still living at home...[not] worrying about rent...or children...and they could focus more on college.

According to Karen, academia was only a marginal component in her Gordon students' lives. They were already being pulled away from academia, from the composition class, before they even entered the door. The *other* places, which drew students away from college, the would-be intellectual center of their lives, had already crystallized their identities as mothers, fathers, laborers, managers, business owners, skater punks, farmers and fulltime slackers--all of which seemed contrary to traditional student subjectivity. Like many of the instructors at Gordon, Karen understood that her students were indifferent to college--or at least less inspired by learning than she had been as a college student. While sitting in her classroom, Karen's students had somewhere, and someone, else to be. And their inclination to be elsewhere manifested itself in writing assignments:

> They have a hard time finding the time to make [writing] a process. We can say, `writing is a

> process' until we're purple, but when people have a full-time job, all these kids, three other classes... finding time to make it a real process is difficult. They sit down and crank it out the night before because that's all the time they got.

As Karen's rendering of her students suggests, the Gordon Com/Hum faculty and their students were experiencing a clash of expectations. The traditional wisdom of writing pedagogy seemed useless. For example, process pedagogy[5], which suggests that students experience writing as a recursive set of behaviors that evolve into increasingly focused discourse, assumes, at the very least, that students have time to invest themselves in such an act. But students at Gordon did not, often could not, envision themselves engaged in such activity. Their lives acted against the possibility of such an idea. Another composition instructor, Zena, explained that "it is difficult for [students] to understand the nature of a process if that process is broken up because of lack of attendance."

Besides students' intellectual and physical absence from class, some instructors also blamed lack of academic preparation for many of the ills in their composition classrooms. Karen, for example, explained that her students often had missed crucial instruction at the secondary level:

> I [received] essays in which women are explaining how

> they didn't care about school in high school, but are now determined to be good role models for their children. But the problem is they lack basic skills. You can see it in their writing. They don't know how to write a sentence, develop a paragraph, stay on an idea...so they have that ground to make up...they don't have the mechanical stuff because they missed it...they didn't think it was going to matter.

Karen claimed that the lack of preparation intimidated students, which in turn caused them to retreat, to further distance themselves from the academic discourses which had consistently labeled them as unintelligent, as "outsiders," even before coming to college.

However, despite the students' previous preparation, the most consistent and profound "difficulty" for the composition students, according to seven out of the ten instructors interviewed, was in "finding something to say" for writing assignments.[6] Adam, for example, described the processes of finding something to say, or invention, as "a big burden" for his students, who would often "wait too long to settle on a topic," and then miss the opportunities for generating and workshopping multiple drafts. He described the invention phase as "the most underestimated part of writing," and that "everything is possible only after that." Other instructors referred to the burden of invention, suggesting that "getting started" or "choosing a topic,"

created the most confusion and apprehension for their students.

But while invention seemed the most burdensome task for the Gordon composition students, it was also viewed by the instructors as the conduit between academic and non-academic life--between "out there" and "in here." Invention was seen as the way to get students interested in writing, the single most powerful tool in getting students' *otherlives* to converge with the discourses of academia. Instructors hoped that if students would be more interested in writing, and more invested in the writing course, they could invent paper topics which included the non-academic parts of their lives. Invention, then, was seen as a bridge between "out there" and "in here." However, getting students from "out there" to use writing as a modality for being "in here" seemed to be working against the ontological status of those places--against what constituted being and succeeding in those places.

As I was attempting to do fall 1997 (described in chapter one), the majority of the Gordon instructors gave students freedom to generate their own topics so they would be more "interested" in their work. However, this strategy was not always successful. In fact, when students were to "find their own topics," based on their own interests, what often developed (instead of papers) was confusion and stasis. Lewis explained:

> I think most students have problems in choosing topics or in focusing on topics or perhaps even finding the right approach or angle to a topic--something that will enliven it. And I think they have these problems because they are essentially throwing out guesses and hoping that something will work. They seem to have very little sense of nuance. *To them writing is this amorphous blobby thing--so long as it has words it's ok....* That's the only way I can explain why a typical student asked to describe an object or event will write about (even with much conferencing and suggesting) how diabetes has affected her life. I know that diabetes is important to this person; however the writing expresses none of that. Why, then, couldn't I get them to describe what it's like to inject themselves each day--in detail, down to the drop of blood that wells up, or the pinch, or the dread of reading the numbers on the machine counter--or anything? It all seems so obvious to me--it all seems so unobvious to them.

Lewis described a set of problems (and theoretical issues) that resonated throughout the Com/Hum department--and perhaps even throughout the field of composition studies. He suggested that while students have ample life experience to generate "interesting" paper topics, they do not understand

HOW topics work in academia; that is, they "have very little sense of [academic] nuance," and this leaves them throwing out guesses. Writing is "blobby" because they do not have specific and *articulatable* tools for developing ideas. As Lewis explained, what seems painfully obvious to those in the academic writing community is "unobvious" to those outside.[8] And as I described in Chapter One, the students at Gordon were, for the most part, those on the outside of academia, or, at best, only apprehensively positioned on the peripheral borders.

Placing Ourselves Out of Crisis

Despite their consensus regarding the problems of invention in composition classes, instructors differed on, and argued over, pedagogical solutions. On one side of a rather broad continuum of strategies, instructors insisted that students should be "free" to choose "whatever they wanted" to write about. One such instructor, Joel, prompted students to "discover themselves" in essays, believing that composition students should be taught to discover their own voices and that writing can/should be "self-satisfying." In the process discovering themselves, he claimed, his students would find writing, itself, to be fulfilling. Contrarily, one of Joel's colleagues, Deiter, prompted students to write about specific political/cultural issues that were raised in the classroom. He believed that composition students should

be taught how to better analyze the world around them. He criticized pedagogies such as Joel's that send students on a track of self-discovery.

The tension between inner-directed (Joel) and outer-directed (Deiter) pedagogies[9] surfaced in department and committee meetings. Whenever the Com/Hum faculty spoke of assignments, department objectives, or department-wide requirements, we often came to an impasse. One such requirement was the library/research unit for Composition 111, which was to introduce students to the research tools at the college. On one hand, instructors who preferred the inner-directed approach argued that the library unit did not coincide with the objectives of the course, that it distracted students as they were learning how to express their ideas. One instructor insisted that the library unit was impinging on students' opportunities to "discover their writerly voices." On the other, some instructors, arguing for the necessity of the library unit, claimed that the Composition 111 students needed more practice working with scholarly voices, that students could not learn the language of academia without constantly reading it.

Such departmental debates resonate with a long-standing tension in the rhetorical tradition, and more recently in composition studies, between expressionists and social constructionists. At a broad level, the expressionists focus on the ways an individual gains voice (alone and among a

community of peers). The social constructionists, informed by post-structuralist, or outer-directed, notions of subjectivity, focus on the role discourse plays in constructing consciousness, and thus a repertoire of writerly voices. In fact, the social constructionists hesitate to even acknowledge individual and instead discuss how discourses create and animate subject positions for individuals.

Much theorizing in composition studies has focused on the expressionist/social constructionist rift, and many attempts have been made to reconcile the conceptual gap. The solution offered in such reconciliatory responses often focuses on the materiality of the classroom, or on the students' lives. For example, in his analysis of the on-going debate, Peter Elbow suggests that we help students to "situate" themselves within a broader conversation. He avoids the potentially thorny issues of writerly "authenticity" and "real" personal voice, and instead, focuses on the situated-ness of students in a classroom.[10] In a similar gesture, Bruce Horner explains that to bridge the gap between personal and social perspectives, composition classes can be viewed as work *sites* where the personal is transformed by the social:

> In such courses, the "personal" is taken not as the discrete residence of the individual immune to the play

> of the social nor as yet another passive register of the social, but as a site of and for contesting meanings, building on, responding to, and revising those.[11]

In other words, for Horner, the "personal" is synonymous with place--with *where*.

Still another example which focuses on the materiality of the writerly context is Randall Freisinger's solution. In the contest between expressionist and social constructionist pedagogies, he argues that individual students do need to develop a voice, but one that is politicizing, and resistant to powers which silence them. He believes students should be taught how to "seek a place to stand, a place from which to resist against a world so badly in need of change."[12] Like Horner, Freisinger equates voice, even personal agency, with place--a particular location which gives rise to ideas and action.

Interestingly, whatever insights they afford, these attempts at reconciling two seemingly disparate pedagogical approaches (and their attendant theories) invariably resort to spatial metaphors. They *locate* student voices; they provide their students with a *place* to stand; they *situate* voices within a classroom environment. While such metaphors give an apparently more "real" or physical sense to a rather abstract set of issues, they also illustrate something about

the nature of writing pedagogy: *that a sense of space is inherent to the relations among students, their peers, their instructors, and the act of writing.*

A particularly relevant spatial metaphor is proposed by Mara Holt. In a scholarly exchange with John Trimbur, Holt claims that inner-directed and outer-directed pedagogies need to function together. She argues that composition studies should see "the two polarities...in a dialectical (or more fashionably, `dialogical') relationship with one another."[13] She claims that compositionists need to "remember the unarguable value in enfranchising a single voice" despite the almost religious appeal of poststructuralist theory. In attempt to deconstruct the expressionists/social constructionists rift, Holt finally claims that composition pedagogy needs to focus on the identity of the individual student, that, like the early twentieth-century educator, John Dewey, we need to "start *where students are*" (emphasis mine). We need, that is, to use the students' experiences as material and impetus for writing.[14]

Urban Nomads and Problems with *Where*

The ultimate objective for a pedagogy that begins "where students are" is to lead students where they are *not*, to academia. The idea, it seems, is to take students from somewhere outside of academia and draw them inward. Of course, composition studies has numerous metaphors for such

an enterprise: we take students *across the academic threshold;* we guide them *over the academic borderland;* we bring them into *a new frontier.*[15] The assumption working throughout such metaphors is that academia (and specifically a composition class) is a knowable place--that it constituted by geographical elements, which would suggest (to a student) that there is a *here* here. However, at Gordon, it seemed as though many of the students were not experiencing the same *here* as instructors.

Basing a pedagogy on "where students are" requires that students are some*place*, that even intellectually, they are connected to a "where" which has given rise to their identities, or to their discursive make-up. However, the students at Gordon were not necessarily in one, or from one, particular place--or so it seemed. Instead, they seemed scattered among several places (places which often seemed inherently contradictory to one another, and always in tension with Gordon Community College). Contrary to traditional university students, who come to a college campus from some*where* and then appear coherently present before their instructors (within the *here-ness* of university grounds), the Gordon students were mired in the processes of coming and going.[16]

Beginning a semester "where students are" also asserts a particular conception of place, one that makes place transparent, readable. It suggests that instructors can see

the meaning of students' lives and make assignments which emerge out of that understanding. But the "where" of the Gordon students' lives was elusive. As I explained in chapter one, much of my time as a first-year faculty member was spent wondering how to meet students on their own "ground" because, in coming to Gordon, they had in some essential way displaced themselves; that is, they were not invested in the space of traditional academia, nor were they invested in a space perceptible to traditional academic view. Students in both my classes and in those of the instructors I interviewed seemed, for lack of a better term, *where-less.*[17]

What I am suggesting, then, is that the geography of the Gordon students' lives and of the campus itself had something to do with the complexities of teaching writing in composition courses. In a very literal sense, I am suggesting that the physical geography of an institution, and the human geography which surrounds and constitutes it, impact the topography of composition courses--and ultimately influence the success (or failure) of pedagogical strategies. As Nedra Reynolds explains, "Place does matter; surroundings do have an effect on learning or attitudes towards learning, and material spaces have a political edge. In short, *where* instruction takes place has everything to do with *how*."[18] It seems, then, that any exploration of *how* to teach must also be a thorough exploration of *where*--of the geographical complexities that constitute the materiality and the

conceptual elements of place.

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[1] Clifford, in Contending With Words, 39

[2] All instructor names have been changed to protect identities.

[3] Claims regarding Com/Hum instructors in this chapter are supported by faculty interviews, conducted during the fall of 1997. See Appendix B for specific questions.

[4] Even though some of the older students had some broader understanding of how college could provide a renewed sense direction, many were not necessarily attracted to, or comfortable with, the actual practices and processes of the academic setting.

[5] The process movement, which gained status and momentum in the 1970's, highlights the individual cognitive processes that writers use in composing. Janet Emig's The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders is often seen as the first major publication of the process movement. Although many criticisms of process pedagogy have come in the past twenty years (see Miller's Textual Carniv ds), it still has significant residual effects on composition programs, textbooks, and classroom teaching. Many, perhaps most, composition instructors, for instance, assume that successful student writers follow a set of distinct and nameable cognitive behaviors in generating text. Consequently, many composition courses and textbooks are arranged around an assumed pattern of composing.

[6] See question #5 on Instructor Survey, Appendix B.

[7] I'll further discuss the geopolitical complexities of the inside/outside dichotomy in chapters three and four .

[8] Lewis' argument, of course, echoes that of David Bartholomae's influential text, "Inventing the University."

[9] In her essay, "Cognition, Convention, and Certainty," Patricia Bizzell uses these terms, *inner-directed and outer-directed* to distinquish between two competing conceptions of writing processes, and the theoretical assumptions operating in each.

[10] Elbow, "Introduction" in Landmark Essays on Voice and Writing, xliii.

[11] Horner, 525.

[12] Freisinger, 210.

[13] Holt, Mara and John Trimbur, 50.

[14] The phrase, "where students are," may be seen as a *mere* metaphor for beginning with students' interests, or for assigning reading materials which correspond with their cultural experiences. But it seems that the spatiality of the metaphor is important—not simply within the confines of Holt's argument, but to a broader set of dynamics and conceptual apparatus in writing pedagogy. As I'll argue in Chapter Four, college composition instructors are often positioned on "the border" between academic and non-academic terrain (and consciousness). We see ourselves as agents of initiation, bringing students into a new land. It is what Mahala and Swiky call "the discipline's geography of service" (626). The practice of beginning "where students are," then, suggests a kind of geo-politics implicit in the practice of writing pedagogy.

[15] In "Composition's Imagined Geographies: The Politics of Space in the Frontier , City, and Cyberspace," Nedra Reynolds analyzes the use of such metaphors. Later, in Chapter Four, Reynolds' analysis will be used to help support my analysis of composing space at Gordon Community College.

[16] I do not mean to suggest that "traditional" college students are implicitly coherent and self-present folks. My point here, and in chapter four, is that Gordon students, and those like them, exist without the attending geography of university life. Also, I do not mean to suggest that a "nomadic" or transient lifestyle is inherently without meaning. In fact, as I'll explain in chapters four and five, commuter students, such as Gordon's, have many textual layers, and much to teach traditional academia.

[17] As I'll explain in chapter three, placelessness is considered by many sociology and geography theorists to be a condition of everyday life in the late twentieth century.

[18] Reynolds, 20.

CHAPTER THREE.
THE METAPHYSICS OF *WHERE*:
GEOGRAPHY, CRITICAL THEORY AND CRITICAL SPACE

As I explained in the first two chapters, most instructors at Gordon Community College wanted, in some way, to begin those processes of initiating their students into college writing by locating and using those students' points of student interest. However, discovering, in essence, just where their students were amidst the exhausting terrain of cultural discourses was no small task. Were the students running recklessly through fields of rogue consumerism, or were they securely locked in complicated personal narratives? Were they steeped in the language of an academic major or mired in everyday life far from the din of academia. In a bizarre kind of academic "Where's Waldo," the Gordon Community College instructors seemed to be looking for their students, attempting to discover the set of circumstances which would prompt them to write, or even want to write. Meanwhile, the students themselves seemed lost on campus, wondering around in a placeless vacuum.

Wrestling with my own and others' problems of teaching writing at Gordon Community College (and perhaps other similar environments) raised questions about the nature of the relationships between *where* teaching is done and *how* it

is done, between *where* students learn and *how* they learn, between conceptions of academic space and non-academic space. As I struggled with these issues, I began to conclude that our pedagogical problems were tied up in our basic assumptions about space. I concluded that confusion about the nature of academic space confounds the practices of pedagogy. That is, when the ontological status of the location in which teaching occurs is ill-defined (or in limbo between contesting perspectives), then we have some new and important questions to answer, not only about the nature of that particular location, but also about the nature of space.

A Brief History of Modern Space

Theorists in critical geography have been exploring such conceptual terrain; they investigate the ways in which space and conceptions about space figure into the practices and conditions of everyday living. These theorists focus on the relationship between where something happens and how it happens. For theorists such as Edward Soja, the very nature of being is spatial; hence, queries into the nature of space involve ontology, and ontological queries involve the metaphysics of space.[1]

But before critical geographers could thoroughly explore the complexities of space, however, they had to revive its importance in critical theory,[2] arguing that modern thought, including geography within the modern academic tradition, has overlooked space as a dynamic element of everyday life (hence as a topic worthy of theoretical discussion). Edward Soja explains the subordination of space in critical thought as a consequence of two historiocentric perspectives which emerged early in the twentieth century. On one hand, Leninist Marxism, as it was gaining political status in the early part of the century, forwarded historical materialism, which focused on the teleological progression of events through time.[3] On the other, Western social sciences of the early twentieth century[4] focused on human behavior as it was being systematized by the processes of modernization (increased separation from nature and more involvement in the processes of mass production).

These "disciplinary orthodoxies," says Edward Soja, focused on the temporal dynamics of an increasingly modernizing world, and cast aside any complicated understanding of spatialization.[5] And although some mid-century avant-garde movements, in art and literature, "sensed the instrumentality of space,"[6] "the consolidating and

codifying realms of social science and scientific socialism...obscured...spatialization, leaving it almost entirely outside the purview of critical interrogation for the next fifty years."[7] The result was an intellectual tradition which conceived space as merely an arena for the dynamic goings-on of history. Space, according to Soja, was seen as "the domain of the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile--a world of passivity and measurement rather than action and meaning."[8] In this tradition, geography was delegated to gathering and reporting data--rather than theorizing about spatial complexities. Geographers collected information to be used by the government for militaristic, intelligence, and cartographic purposes.

Perhaps the most significant factor in the reduction, or fixating, of space and geography was the increasing stronghold, and teleology, of capitalism in the United States.[9] As free market capitalism gained control of nineteenth century daily life, spatial science shifted. According to Derek Gregory, perceptions of space were "strained...through a narrowly economic filter to produce partial or general models of an economic landscape or space-economy"[10] so that by the beginning of the twentieth century,

the discipline had been enveloped by the study of economics: "Geographies of the late nineteenth century had been invested in the construction of a specifically economic geography, which by the middle of the twentieth century had become the empirical core of human geography."[11] And because economics prioritized the functionality of time, over that of space, geography was complicit in the de-valuation of space.[12]

It was not only the academic disciplines and the economic imperatives that cast space as "the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile." It was also the more general re-calibration of the American society. Through the nineteenth century, land was becoming more settled. As land became procured from native peoples and bordering countries (either by war or by theft), U.S. governing bodies needed to focus more on the social processes and political exigencies of a territory rather than on defining its borders. Even as early as the end of the eighteenth century, says Michel Foucault, conceptions of the nature of spatiality in governing changed radically:

> What was discovered at that time--and this was one of the great discoveries of political thought at the end of the eighteenth century--was the idea of

> society. That is to say, that government not only has to deal with territory, with a domain, and with its subjects, but that it also has to deal with a complex and independent reality that has its own laws and mechanisms of reaction, its regulations as well as its possibilities of disturbance....[13]

This shift (or what Foucault suggests is the "question of liberalism") changed the way governing bodies conceptualized their power, and the way they envisioned subjects--not simply as entities within a governable space, but as entities tied to and participant in a system of practices. In other words, the emphasis on territory changed to an emphasis on the practices of the society, and the territory itself became invisible, merely an arena for activity.

As territories were increasingly settled in the United States and the industrial revolution gained momentum, land came to be seen as potential product, rather than a particular place. And, of course, once this conception gained footing throughout the country, the major economic regimes (banks and corporations) went into the business of buying/selling land. As land commodification became widespread, fewer individual farmers could manage to keep

land, and a mass migration to the cities began. By the beginning of the twentieth century, America was on a path of increasing urbanism, and patterns of daily life began changing radically from agrarian days. Perhaps one of the most profound transformations was that living space became separate from working space, and the journey between made space something, simply, to traverse.[14]

As farmers turned into factory laborers, another significant shift occurred in spatiality. Individual people were positioned by machines--that is, by the structure of mechanization. Factory workers were placed, partitioned, and identified according to the operation of massive machines. In this increasingly industrializing era, says Anthony Giddens, "the tendency was...to distribute individuals in demarcated space, but this distribution had to be directed towards the co-ordination of machinery. Thus the arrangement of bodies in space had to correspond to the technical demands of production."[15] The act of labor, and the geography of labor, was becoming scripted by the abstract and abstracting causalities of mass production; workers existed *within a system, rather than in a space.*

Coinciding with the processes of mass production, advances in communication technology made distance, and the once intimidating magnitude of the American landscape, irrelevant. "The rise of mass-circulation newspapers, the advent of the telegraph and telephone, of radio and television," says David Harvey, "all contributed to a new sense of simultaneity over space and total uniformity in coordinated and universally uniform time."[16] For the rapidly decreasing small businesses and farms across the country, the broad dissemination of information simply stimulated the processes of universalization. As they were linked to the major metropolitan centers of commerce, they were made more uniform in the practices of production (and consumption).

As the twentieth century roared in, the status of technology was creating a new consciousness, one that imagined space as something to be conquered. From the mass production of the automobile to the celebration of super-vessels such as the Titanic, technology was making space insignificant. Humankind could overcome the obstacles that nature had placed in its way. Environmental determinism would no longer define human life...unless, of course, the environment itself was the product of capital.

Fall into the Gap: Capitalism and Dead Space

According to Anthony Giddens, modern industry and the spread of urbanism accompany one another in the processes of capitalism. In the modern capitalistic city, human activity is structured to support production; in turn, production produces more city.[17] As a result, space gets abstracted, blurred into the modes of production. In other words, a particular place[18] is not a "real" experiential zone as much as it is a potential production location--or a product itself. In this way, capitalism produces a "created environment"[19] in which space is always already consumed.[20] The entire range of social practices which constitute capitalism seem to undermine space and threaten any understanding of its complexities. As David Harvey explains, capitalism seeks to universalize space as potential commodity:

> Space cannot be considered independently of money because it is the latter, as Marx...insists, that permits the separation of buying and selling in both space and time. The breaking of the bonds of personal dependency through money exchange is here

> paralleled by the breakdown of local barriers so that "my product becomes dependent on the state of general commerce and it is torn out of its local, natural, and individual boundaries."[21]

Local places, then, are ultimately insignificant; local labor and the product that labor produces are pulled into the hegemony and homogeneity of capitalism. Money, as a uniform and universal agent of bestowing ownership (and power), effectively erases the meaning of local places. All places are trapped in "a mutual dependency" upon an objective principle.[22]

The universalizing of time is also an essential part of the dynamic that erases space. Time, as it is conceived in capitalism, is measured by its monetary worth (hence, the tiresome adage, "time is money"). Time, then, becomes abstracted and detached from individual experience; it is "objectified in the sense that it has been severed from an integral involvement with the situated practices of daily life."[23] And the objectification of time, then, results in the annihilation of space. As Harvey explains:

> [I]t [is], Marx insisted, labor time that defined money, while the *price of time* or *profit* was the fundamental dimension to the capitalist's logic of decision. From this Marx could derive what he saw as a necessary impulsion under capitalism to annihilate the constraints and frictions of space, together with the particularities of space." [24]

Then, according to Harvey, the "consequent victory of time over space...[means] acceptance of a way of life in which speed and rush to overcome space [is] of the essence.[25]

And, to further confound these dynamics, not only does time annihilate space, but also time and space are removed from individual experience. In what Giddens calls *time-space distanciation*, human behavior is bound up in the trust of distant and abstract systems. And, capitalism, says Giddens, urges trust in increasingly abstract systems. For example, a small business owner must put her trust not only in a local bank, but also in the entire bank franchise, the F.D.I.C., the federal budget, and ultimately the global market. In this sense, her worth is dependent on an increasingly distant set of entities. In the processes of distanciation, space is irrelevant, and face-to-face, or what Erving Goffman calls

co-present, encounters are diminished. What matters is complicity to an abstract order. In Giddens' terms, places become "'thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of influences quite distant from them.'"[26]

In a contrasting metaphor, David Harvey refers to these dynamics as *time-space compression*. According to Harvey, the disorientation of modern life comes not necessarily from having time and space removed but in having global notions of time and space implode inward onto experience.[27] In a kind of ironic twist, the more social relations stretch out across the globe, the more the world seems to shrink. The individual seems to experience everywhere, and at the same time, nowhere. Although the metaphor is different from Giddens', Harvey's point is much the same. Both critique the results of expanding capitalism, and both describe time and space as unsituated, abstracted by the modalities of "capitalist-industrialist urbanism."[28]

Giddens and Havey's metaphors provide broad, generalized, commentary on experience; but beneath these sweeping characterizations of time and space, smaller, individual and community, behaviors and activities are "penetrated by and shaped in terms of" capitalism's influences. Individual consciousness is always already

being un-situated from its local context, aesthetic, and value systems. Perhaps the most consistent reminder of time-space compression comes in the form of advertisements, campaigns which suggest, in some manner, that 'everyone, regardless of *where* they are or *who* they are,' desires, needs, or fits into a certain product. Take, for example, a recent *Gap* ad campaign for Khaki slacks, which features a group of young, racially-diverse, people dancing to various types of music: disco, country, rock and roll. In each of the commercials, the music is different, and the people are somewhat faceless (vacuously smiling), but the Khaki's are the same. The point: It doesn't matter where you are or what kind of music you like, Khaki's are for you.' The same point is made in countless television and radio ads around the world.

Capitalism, Control and Space

Most critical geographers[9] concur regarding the ultimate effect capitalist-industrialist urbanism has on individual life experience and consciousness. Quite simply, they contend, capitalism *produces* everyday life.[10] The participation in the abstract(ing) and distanciating systems of a capitalistic society prompt, even demand, the

routinization of everyday life. And because those systems are, for the individual consciousness, nowhere in the present region of existence, life is defined by the regimes of everyday routine and the distant principles that guide them.[11] As everyday life is produced by the numbing delirium of routinization, it is automatically re-produced, and with it, positions of power are always being re-created and re-stabilized. Says David Harvey:

> Thus, control over the creation of...space also confers a certain power over the processes of social reproduction… Control over spatial organization and authority over the use of space become crucial means for the reproduction of social power relations. The state or some other social grouping such as financiers, developers, or landlords, can thus often hide their power to shape social reproduction behind the seeming neutrality of their power to organize space.[12]

The "space" Harvey describes is not the space of "real" lived experience, but the product of capital; it is "created environment." And this space is not merely a tool or product

of capitalistic systems; it is also an agent of reproduction. That is, space actually functions in the re-processing of the systems. As Foucault argues, "space is fundamental in any exercise of power."[33] And from a Foucauldian perspective, Giddens claims, "There is no doubt that disciplinary power can be systematically generated only by the 'packing' of human beings into specific physically demarcated settings."[34]

It is important to note that Giddens, Foucault, Harvey and other critical theorists making similar claims about power and space are not suggesting a pre-meditated plot by governmental organizations; rather, they are describing the subtle inclinations of a system which maintains its power through the control of bodies in space. And, in turn, it conceals that control in its own construction of spatiality. As Gregory claims, the processes of control rely heavily on the trust that is put into the systems of capitalism:

> Trust, which Giddens takes to mean reliability in the face of contingent outcomes, becomes a necessary condition of modern time-space distanciation. But it is also double-edged. Abstract systems create large areas of security for the conduct of social life; their incorporation

> into time-space routines provides the minimal continuity, coherence and calculability necessary for the taken-for-granted, matter-of-factness of the social world. And the generalized guarantees that they provide, whatever confidence limits may be placed around them, encourage repetitive and renewed investments of trust.[35]

From the Giddensian perspective, life which is steeped in capitalist-industrial urbanism is unsettling. It is ungrounded, unstable, and fragmented, taking its form from the various systems of capitalistic control. The individual takes no meaning from, or makes meaning out of, his/her specific location, but dangles from the meaningless principles of an invisible structure.

Late Capitalism, Postmodernism, and Spacing Out

One of the seminal texts on the nature of capitalism and cultural dynamics is Fredric Jameson's "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." Jameson argues that capitalism has undergone a gradual progression through three basic phases: market capitalism, monopoly capitalism, and multinational capitalism. What distinguishes the late(est)

version of capitalism, according to Jameson, is that it extends beyond national borders, and even beyond modern conceptions of space. The third phase, he suggests, has ushered in a new spatial logic, one which is both globalizing (hence, in some ways, homogenizing) and fragmenting.

In the Jamesonian view, capitalism has simply followed its vectors, its proclivity to annihilate space, and in so doing, it has gone beyond itself, out of the United States and into China, Vietnam, etc. Also, according to Jameson and others who share his view, besides exceeding national borders, capitalism has gone beyond the "real," and into an infinite realm of "pseudo-events," or what Baudrilliard calls the *hyperreal*.[36] In other words, leaping consistently outward, capitalism currently extends beyond national boundaries and beyond conceptions of real space; capitalism has hyper-extended itself in its attempt to continuously create marketplace(s). Such an extension, according to Jameson, has left the individual completely alienated amidst imperceptible terrain:

> ...this latest mutation in space—postmodern hyperspace—has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to

> locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world. And I have already suggested that this alarming disjunction point between the body and its built environment--which is to the initial bewilderment of the older modernism as the velocities of space craft are to those of the automobile--can itself stand as the symbol and analogue of that even sharper dilemma which in the incapacity of our minds, at least, at present, to map the great global multinational and decentred communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects.[37]

What seems even more dubious for Jameson is that late, or multinational, capitalism seems impervious to critique. Because its subsumes the individual, it leaves no capacity for "critical distance," that which is imperative, and had been apparently achievable, for modernist/leftist criticism:

> No theory of cultural politics current on the Left today has been able to do without one notion or another of a certain minimal aesthetic distance, of the possibility of the positioning of the cultural act outside the massive Being of capital…What the burden of our preceding demonstration suggests, however, is that distance, in general (including 'critical distance' in particular) has very precisely been abolished the new space of postmodernism. We are submerged in its henceforth filled and suffused volumes to the point where our now postmodern bodies are bereft of spatial coordinates and practically (let alone theoretically) incapable of distanciation....[13]

For Jameson, the expansion of capitalism actually shrinks the world for the individual consciousness so that we are "submerged" in its processes. Like Harvey's time\space compression, Jameson suggests that the human individual experiences the entire mass of "the capital Being," and so feels burdened by its aesthetic appeal.[14]

In the face of such a "capital Being," Jameson offers *cognitive mapping*, a tactic for locating the human subject amidst the chaotic space of late capitalism. If the human subject can escape at all, Jameson claims, it will be through a process of mapping the postmodern, a process "in which we may again begin to grasp our positioning as individual and collective subjects and regain a capacity to act and struggle which is at present neutralized by our spatial as well as our social confusion." He continues, arguing that "the political form of postmodernism, if there ever is any, will have as its vocation the invention and projection of a global cognitive mapping, on a social as well as a spatial scale."[40]

Transgression and Radical Re-Territorilizing: Space as Social and Political[41]

Following Jameson's lead, critical geographers as well see the re-mapping of space as an essential act of resistance. Accordingly, space is being (re)claimed as a radically socio-political entity. For example, in their introduction to Place and the Politics of Identity, Keith and Pile argue that political action and re-spatializating are possible, even in the midst of capitalism's hyper-extending modalities of hegemony:

> A different sense of place is being theorized, no longer passive, no longer fixed, no longer undialectical--because disruptive features interrupt any tendency to see once more open space as the passive receptacle for any social process that cares to fill it--but, still, in a very real sense about location and locatedness.[42]

Other theorists point to the slippage that accompanies the evolution of capital, and the potential for re-claiming the space left open in that slippage. Take, for example, Henri LeFebvre's description of capital systemization:

> There is not and never has been an accomplished system, only an attempt at systemisation (coherence and cohesion) on the basis of the relations of production and the contradictions…It will be accomplished at the end (not at the beginning)—if, that is, the end (which it both precipitates and conceals) will permit it to appear accomplished. For when systematisation begins to succeed, it

> means that the fragmentation which this will provoke is just around the corner.[43]

Systems, then, are not necessarily stable and unassailable. Systems of production--including those that produce space and conceptions of space--are always in process of systematization. As Soja explains, "the production of capitalist spatiality...is no once-and-for-all event. The spatial matrix must constantly be reinforced and, when necessary, restructured--that is, spatiality must be socially reproduced," and this reproduction process is a continuing source of conflict and crisis.[44] Even more explicit with respect to the exact nature of spatial reproduction is Michel de Certeau's description of our "contemporary" setting:

> ...[I]t also seems that the generalization of and expansion of technocratic rationality have created, between the links of the system, a fragmentation and explosive growth of these practices which were formerly regulated by the stable local units.... Cut loose from the traditional communities that circumscribed their functioning, they have begun to wander everywhere in a space which is becoming at

> once more homogenous and more extensive. Consumers are transformed into immigrants. The system is too vast to be able to fix them in one place, but too constraining for them ever to be able to escape from it and go into exile elsewhere. There is no longer an elsewhere. Because of this, the "strategic" model is also transformed, as it is defeated by its own success.[45]

As LeFebvre, Soja, de Certeau and others have argued, the systems of capital have, seemingly, consumed every *where*, but they have also begun to fragment, to lose coherence. The very mechanics that have created the seemingly impervious nature of capitalism contain, as well, the mechanics for its radical transformation.

Views as to how strategic transformative moves can exploit slippage in the system of capital vary. In Jameson's rendering of cognitive mapping, he claims that political action must be taken on both the "social as well as the spatial scale." His phrasing suggests that the social and spatial are ultimately distinct entities. But many critical geographers assert that the spatial is inherently social, and

the social inherently spatial. According to Doreen Massey, for example,

> ...we need to conceptualize space as constructed out of interrelations, as the simultaneous coexistence of social interrelations and interactions at all spatial scales, from the most local level to the most global… On the one hand, all social (and indeed physical) phenomena/activities/relations have a spatial form and a relative spatial location: the relations that bind communities, whether they be local societies or worldwide organizations; the relations within an industrial corporation; the debt relations between the South and the North; the relations that result in the popularity in certain European cities in the music from Mali. ...[T]here is no way of getting away from the fact that the social inexorably also spatial.[44]

What seems most important, for Massey, is that space be conceived as a dynamic entity, constituted and re-constituted by the interrelations of real people and real communities.

In this light, space is not simply a template, an objectified and abstracted entity, or even something that is "mappable" outside of the social. Similarly, Edward Soja explains that the social features of space are its "transformative dynamic:"

> Spatiality exists ontologically as a product of a transformative process, but always remains open to further transformation in the contexts of material life. It is never primordially given or permanently fixed… *it is precisely this* ***transformative dynamic, its associated social tensions and contradictions, and its rootedness in active spatial praxis***, that has been blocked from critical theoretical consciousness for over the past one hundred years. The spaces that have been seen are illusive ones, blurring our capacity to envision the social dynamics of spatialization [emphasis mine].[47]

For Soja, the real radical power of space has been concealed from the vision of critical perspectives. And, according to

his argument, critical theory needs to conceive new ways to highlight the transformative power implicit to space.

To this end, Edward Soja refers to Henri LeFebvre's theory of the trialectics of spatiality. Borrowing from LeFebvre's multi-dimensional understanding of space, Soja suggests that lived space, or "third space," is "simultaneously real and imagined," where "things and thought" are on equal terms--always working and re-working the relationship between consciousness and space. Consciousness, sociality, and space are bound together. And, in that unión, these phenomena are generative; that is, they make life what it is. In other words, they are the basis of ontology, or for Soja, "spatialized ontology."[48] Third space, then, is the opposite of space within capitalistic production: it generates possibilities of acting and of knowing; it associates, rather than dissociates, individuals with others, with particular location, and with the possibilities of acting therein; it is "the terrain for the generation of counterspaces, spaces of resistance to the dominant order...."[49]

Body, Place, Practice

In critical geography, much of what constitutes political resistance is the practice and acknowledgement of daily life within particular places. This is not to say that particular places are not rife with their own power hierarchies or ideology. In fact, given the stated goal of critical theory, it becomes important to recognize how specific places make meaning and ultimately reproduce ideology. According to Cresswell:

> spatial structures and the system of places provide historically contingent but durable 'schemes of perception' that have an ideological dimension. In particular, the place of an act is an active participant in our understanding of what is good, just, and appropriate.[50]

Cresswell goes on to explain that social practice within places, in turn, works to support the ideologies therein. For example:

> When we are silent in the library or kneeling in the church, we are "reading" the place. This practice is, in turn, informed by the always already existing meanings of the place. Kneeling in church is an interpretation of what the church means; it also reinforces the meaning of the church. Place is produced by practice that adheres to (ideological) beliefs about what is the appropriate thing to do. But place reproduces the beliefs that produce it in a way that makes them appear natural, self-evident, and commonsense.[61]

So in many ways particular places are not necessarily the opposite of abstract systems of capital; that is, they also project ideological norms. Particular local places are also projections of ideology and projectors of ideology.

It is important, then, that we do not simply romanticize the local, as somehow more politically invigorating, or invigorated. We cannot see the small town, the small business, or the community college as more politically expedient than the large city, the sprawling corporation, or the ivory towered university. Rather, we must see how specific modes of practice work within particular places.

Michel de Certeau offers insight into the relationship between place and practice--or more specifically, among the workings of power, practice and place. His analysis of place and practice in everyday life reveals a complicated dynamic. Like Cresswell, Certeau suggests that certain (political) practices are carried out according to the nature of spatial goings-on. A powerful or dominant subject (individual, company, organization, army, etc.) uses place in ways different from an oppressed, subordinate, or *other* subject. The dominant employs *strategy*, which is a

> calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as the subject with will and power...can be isolated. [A strategy] postulates a place that can delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations...can be managed.[52]

A dominant subject masters time so that it can "acquire advantages" within a particular place. It masters a particular place through its scope of vision, and sees into distances beyond its particular situated-ness. It "transform[s] the uncertainties of history into readable

spaces."[53] Contrarily, a subordinate entity uses *tactics*, "calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus." Because the subordinate subject does not "own" or possess a place, tactics are carried out on uncharted and unknown territory; they are "isolated actions, [enacted] blow by blow."[54]

What is important in de Certeau's analysis, for the purposes of my project, is that practice is always defined by the power relations operating in a given place. (And in Chapter Four, I will explain, specifically, how his understanding of tactics and strategies make sense within a particular setting.) De Certeau helps us to see that any exploration of place is an exploration of power (and vice versa). Most importantly, de Certeau highlights place as an essential element in the way power functions.

For de Certeau, and a large cadre of critical theorists, the individual human body is paramount to the exploration of place and practice *because it is both location and practice at once*. In much current critical theory (especially in culture studies, women's studies, composition studies, literary criticism, and geography) the body is seen as the most radical agent of political action. According to de Certeau, "the opacity of the body in movement, gesticulating,

walking, taking its pleasure, is what indefinitely organizes a *here* to an *abroad*, a 'familiarity' in relation to a 'foreignness.'[55] The body, in other words, creates location, a sense of *where*. It situates identity--which, again, is contrary to the systems of capitalistic production.

However, much like the critical geographers' reclamation of space, the body needed its own reclamation--or, more aptly, resuscitation. Theorists who presently discuss the body, as text, as agent, as localized spatial ontology, do so against a long-standing philosophical tradition which subordinates the body to the mind, or against the contemporary poststructuralist inclination to render the individual as constituted solely by discourse. As Kristie Fleckenstein explains, the body has been consistently removed from view by either the illusion of "transcendent truth [in traditional philosophy] or culturally constituted textuality [in poststructuralist thought]."[56] From both perspectives, the meaning of the body has been, in Fleckenstein's words, "eclipsed."[57] These perspectives eradicate the immediacy of lived experience and remove the meaning of situated/corporal events from the individual.

According to Fleckenstein, "we need an embodied discourse, one that interprets body as neither passive *tabula rosa* on which meanings are inscribed nor an inescapable animal that must be subdued before pure knowing can be achieved."[58] To that end, she offers the *somatic mind*, or a "being-in-a-material-place." Such a conception, she argues, situates knowing within a place (a tangible, and experiential place). And what is most significant about Fleckenstein's conception is that body and place become a coupling, a dynamic unity:

> The materiality of the somatic mind is tangible location plus being. ...Both organism and place can only be identified by their immanence within each other; an organism in this place (body, clothing, cultural scene, geographical point) is not the same organism in that place. *Who and where (thus, what) are coextensive* [emphasis mine].[59]

She goes on to explain the nature of this dialectical relationship through time, arguing that since body and place form such an inextricable bond, they evolve together. Individual body and particular location form a context that is mutable, dynamic. Much like Edward Soja's "third space"

(explained above), Fleckenstein's somatic mind generates the possibilities of being. Place is ontological, and ontology spatial.

Fleckenstein's somatic mind and Soja's third space emphasize the crucial point of this chapter--that an examination of practice necessarily involves geography. In other words, to understand the problems and nuances of any set of practices, we must have some intellectual tools for understanding the geographical complexities of those practices--for understanding how location, and the politics of location, figures into knowing and acting. This chapter, then, offers a heuristic, a way of seeing and making meaning in the analysis of place and practice. The next chapter seeks to use this insight to make sense of the practices of teaching writing in a particular place--namely Gordon Community College.

[1] See Soja's Postmodern Geographies, 119-20. Later in this chapter, I'll further explain the complexities of Soja's argument, and the broader conversation in critical geography concerning the dynamics of consciousness, social life, and space.

[2] Throughout this chapter, it becomes apparent that critical geography is a more narrow set of practice within a broader field of critical theory. Critical theory can be seen as a transdisciplinary field of inquiry which borrows from and influences disciplines across the curriculum. Throughout this chapter, I refer to both critical geography and the broader field, critical theory. For a more complete discussion on the relations between geography and critical theory, see Donald S. Moore's "Remapping Resistance" in Keith and Pile's Geographies of Resistance.

[3] Later in his discussion, Soja explains the Westernizing of Marxism and its neglect of spatiality. (See pp.79-91). I should also note, here, the Marxist inclination to see political action as transcending space. In Marxist social theory, working classes commit to causes of labor, which supercede geography.

[4] Soja offers some historical precedent for the proctivities of twentieth century social sciences. He regards Kant as impacting the philosophical split between geography and history—and privileging the latter. Likewise, Derek Gregory, in Geographical Imaginations, explains the influence of Kantian perspective on modern disciplinary terrain, specifically on the time/space dualism.

[5] Soja, Postmodern Geographies, 28-33.

[6] Although Soja gives no specifics here, it might be fair to suggest that the Beat writers fit his description. Writers such as Jack Kerouac celebrated the movement across the terrain of America, and even suggested that social life takes its character from particular places.

[7] Soja, Postmodern Geographies, 34.

[8] Ibid 37.

[9] Later in this chapter, I'll explain how late capitalism, which many theorists such as Fredric Jameson consider synonymous with *the postmodern*, denies the complexities of space in everyday life.

[10] Gregory, 59.

[11] Ibid

[12] Gregory, 66-7.

13. Rabinow, The Foucault Reader, 242.

[14] Harvey, Consciousness and the Urban Experience, 8-9. See also LeFebvre, Everyday Life in the Modern World, pp. 26-45.

[15] Giddens, The Constitution of Society, 146.

[16] Harvey, 8-9.

[17] Giddens, 142-44.

[18] Before going on, I should offer some distinction between *space* and *place*. A brief explanation would be to suggest that *place* refers to a particular location and *space* refers to the conceptual notions about place. In The Practice of Everyday Life, Michel de Certeau makes a more interesting distinction, describing *place* as "an indication of stability" and space as a conception which involves "vectors of direction, velocities,

and time variables" (117). Giddens claims that the processes of modernity (described in the preceding section) create the distinction between place and space, that "'in the conditions of modernity...locales [places] are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them'" (qtd. in Massey, Space, Place, and Gender, 6).

[19] Giddens, 144. See also The Giddens Reader, pp. 205-7.

[20] The complete homogenization of space occurs through what Henri LeFebvre calls its "'pulverization' into freely alienable parcels of private property, to be bought and traded at will upon the market." This, says David Harvey (14), turns out to be "the complete domination" of space by capital.

[21] Harvey, 11.

[22] Ibid., 4.

[23] Gregory, 121.

[24] Harvey, 15.

[25] Ibid., 16.

[26] Gregory 122.

[27] Ibid., 120-22.

[28] Cassell, The Giddens Reader, 206-7.

[29] The critical geographers that I invoke here tend to make claims and base their critiques on the assumptions and valuations of Western Marxism. Although the Marxist inclinations among these theorists are wrought with debate, much the argument leveled at capitalistic systemization is Marxist in its origin. For a more complete discussion of Marxism's presence in critical geography, see Soja's Postmodern Geographies, pp. 51-61.

[30] Here, it is important to note that Henri LeFebvre and Anthony Giddens, among others, refer to *everyday* (rather than *daily* or *day-to-day*) life as that which is routinized outside of traditional culture, presumably by the systems of capitalism. Michel de Certeau devotes significant discussion about these distinctions in The Practice of Everyday Life.

[31] Cassell, The Giddens Reader, 206.

[32] Havey, 22-3.

[33] Gregory, 63.

[34] Giddens, The Constitution of Society, 154.

[35] Gregory, 121.

[36] See Baudrillard "The Evil Demon of Images and The Precession of Simulacra."

[37] Jameson, 83.

[38] Ibid., 87.

[39] Jameson's "critical distance" is different from Giddens' distanciated space; however, they do not oppose one another. Jameson's notion of "critical distance" relies on some form of individual, or collective, agency; whereas, Giddensian distanciation is a process which diminishes human agency. The issue for both Jameson and Giddens is one of control; the human subject, as opposed to systems of capital, should have control of the proximity or distance between her/himself and those systems. Jameson's metaphor is perhaps different from Giddens in that the crisis is one of being "submerged" rather than "disembedded" (see Gregory, 117-18.)

[40] Jameson, 91-2.

[41] As I'll explain later in this section, separating the social and the political, as if they are two distinct set of phenomena, is perhaps a misrepresentation. I make the distinction here simply to articulate different theoretical emphases, and will ultimately show that converging the two in socio-political space is a more valuable conceptualization.

[42] Keith and Pile, Place and the Politics of Identity, 5.

[43] LeFebvre, The Survival of Capitalism, 67.

[44] Soja, Postmodern Geographies, 129.

[45] Certeau, 40. Later in this chapter, I will explain Certeau's use of "strategic" as a characterization of hierarchical power, and its opposing term, "tactical," as a characterization of transgressive action.

[46] Massey, 155.

[47] Soja, Postmodern Geographies, 122.

[48] See Soja, Postmodern Geographies, 131-7.

[49] Ibid., 67-8.

[50] Cresswell, 16.

[51] Cresswell, 16.

[52] Certeau, 35-6

[53] Certeau, 36.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Certeau, 130.

[56] Fleckenstein, 281.

[57] Ibid. Also see David Bleich, "Feminist Philosophy and Some Humanists' Attitudes Toward the Teaching of Writing." According to Bleich, the humanist philosophical tradition, which is most often to linked to Decartes, seeks to "shield the mind from whatever knowledge the body may be providing" (145). Bleich argues that Decartes' mind/body split resulted in the eradication of a politics of difference. Because racial/gender difference is seen and experienced at the corporal level, it could be erased if the body was erased from knowing, and from what it means to know. Moreover, after the body was dismissed, all bodily differences which might characterize someone as other-than-white-man, says Bleich, became targets of resentment, fear, and hostility.

[58] Fleckenstein, 281.

[59] Fleckenstein, 286.

CHAPTER FOUR.
LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION: THE "REAL" (E)STATES OF BEING, WRITING AND THINKING IN COMPOSITION

The banal catch phrase of the real estate industry suggests that the only thing more important than location is...well...location. The point, of course, is that landowners, and would-be owners, are buying and selling not only plots of land but also ideas about place. The *idea* about the place determines the worth. The socio-economic, geological, geographical, demographic, and aesthetic history of the surrounding region, or neighborhood, all figure into the *idea* of a particular place--hence into its value. Essentially, then, the real estate industry focuses on the buying and selling of ideas about place.

While I am not going to suggest that real estate and higher education are completely similar enterprises, I do see a compelling, and for the purposes of this chapter, somewhat helpful, similarity. Like real estate, higher education is commodifying an idea, attempting to get students to buy (into) a representation of space--of academic space. The representation itself has value, and like a plot of land, its value is based on an intersection of the material and conceptual, of the "real and the imagined" (Lefebvre's terminology). Moreover, that representation is in contest with other representations, other pre-conceptions, and that contest, as I will explain throughout this chapter, has real (and imagined) consequences on the practices of teaching and

learning.

This chapter will use the vocabulary and theoretical apparatus presented in chapter three to explain the dynamics of space in academia. More specifically, I will return to the particular pedagogical crises at Gordon Community College, and (attempt to) explain how the dynamics of spatiality figure into those crises. Finally, this chapter will offer a conceptual/practical (a real and imagined) framework for writing in place.

Situated/Unsituated Academic Space

As I explain in chapter three, places are always already in a state of being real-ized and imagined according to the dynamics of the social milieu in and around that place. In other words, every particular place is in a constant state of becoming,[1] always animated by multiple layers of representation. The real and the imagined, the material and conceptual, are always linked. Places constitute beliefs about appropriate practices--and are, in turn, maintained by those practices.[2] Dick Hebdige explains how these dynamics work particularly in an academic place:

> ...the buildings literally reproduce in concrete terms prevailing (ideological) notions about what education is and it is through this process that the educational structure, which can, of course,

> be altered, is placed beyond question and appears to us as "given" (i.e. as immutable). In this case, the frames of our thinking have been translated into actual bricks and mortar.[3]

The geography of a campus and the architecture of its buildings, then, are projections or products of a prevailing imagination (which Hebdige calls ideology), and in turn, they help to re-produce imagination (assumptions about what is good and bad, what should be done, what can be done, and how things should be carried out). Academic space is not simply a transparent template in which teaching and learning go on.

At a traditional four-year university, such as Bowling Green State University, the geography produces and is produced by prevailing notions of a *situated academia*.[4] That is, the campus is a center of academic practice; students move from other neighborhoods, towns, states and countries to reside within that particular space. The buildings are arranged to afford an entire continuum of social needs: formal and informal modes of work and play, both study and recreation. Parking lots, for the most part, do not intermingle with buildings, walkways and malls so the acts of coming and going are outside of the main parts of campus. The geography of the campus says, in effect, 'you're staying;' it is part of a prevailing notion about being in the particular space, a residential consciousness, even for

those individuals who reside off-campus.

The representations of such a situated academic space are created and supported by the collective and individual behavior in that space. Certain behavioral patterns or social rituals help to maintain the consciousness which, in turn, help to maintain the actual, physical situatedness of the campus. For example, the mass migration to a residential campus in late summer, when the town is over-wrought with traffic, and the campus parking lots are filled with packed vehicles and confused newcomers, helps to establish a particular consciousness. As one Gordon instructor explained of his undergraduate experience at a four-year residential campus, "the ritual of coming in the fall...made everyone feel like they were there to stay." He went on to explain that his understanding of college changed upon moving to campus, that after his first year of living with his parents close to, but not on, campus, he moved into the dormitories and "felt like [he] was enclosed, like [he] was part of something separate." In moving to campus, he became part of the migration into the place; he understood the ontological distinction of that place.

The "ritual of coming" to campus, then, might be seen as a ritual of *be-coming* part of academic space. According to the principles of spatialized ontology (Edward Soja's phrase, explained in chapter three), a situated academic space creates a situated being--a being situated by and

within the discourses of academia. The individual in a situated academic setting experiences the intersection of place and academic practice (i.e. writing). He/she participates (or, is more apt to participate) in the here and now, in the residential consciousness of the place. Or, according to the terms of Kristie Fleckenstein's somatic mind (also explained chapter three), the individual *is* the intersection of place and academic practices, *is* the here and now of the place. That is, the individual experiences immersion within a place and the practices which define it as different from some other place (i.e. her home town two hours from campus).

The "ritual of coming" to campus might also be seen as a spatial story, that which serves as a "a means of mass transportation," according to Michel de Certeau.[5] Spatial stories, says Certeau, create the meaning of particular places, pronounce them as lived:

> A spatial story is in its minimal degree a spoken language, that is, a linguistic system that distributes places insofar as it is articulated by an "enunciatory focalization," [or body in action] by an act of practicing it.[6]

In other words, participation in a spatial story *is* the act of practicing a place--not practicing *in* a place, but

actually bringing the place, and those immersed therein, into being. *Coming to a college campus in the fall, then, is actually a pronouncement of that campus as a particular place, and a ritual of situating identity.*

At a commuter campus, such as Gordon Community College, the geography and the collective behavior patterns suggest an *unsituated academia.* As I explained in chapter two, the Gordon campus is organized for the needs of the student who is coming and going. Parking lots, rather than grassy malls, lie between buildings, and small in-roads connect different parts of campus. Of course, there are no dormitories, and so there is no residential quality to the campus--nor to the surrounding area. (Outside of the large industrial complex around Gordon College, only a small number of recently built apartment complexes exist.) The entire space says, in effect, 'thanks for coming; drive carefully.'

Although the beginning of fall semester at Gordon is loaded with certain "rituals of coming," they are not necessarily rituals that work to situate the student population within the space. In late August, thousands of students commute to campus for the first time in months, or the first time ever; however, the commute is only the first half of an entire journey which ends elsewhere by the end of the day (work or home). The campus is only a stop, an element in a spatial ontology constituted by the commute itself and some other (final) destination. Coming to campus,

then, is a pronouncement of coming *and going*.

The unsituated academic space creates, and is created by, the dissolution of place and being. The individual in such a place experiences detachment not only from the place, but also from her/his own body while in that place. That is, if the body is the intersection of place and practice (according to Fleckenstein's argument), and if place and practice are inextricably bound (according to LeFebvre, Certeau, Soja, and Fleckenstein's arguments), a place which is unsituated is also *unsituating* to the body/mind.

The Discourses of Distanciation[8]

At Gordon Community College, a vast majority of the students are working toward a two-year degree or technical certificate. Students in technologies (e.g. diesel engines, agricultural sciences, tool and dye) programs plan on being at Gordon for two years, some even less, and then moving on to jobs within the region. A significant number even have jobs, or higher positions, waiting for them at completion of their degree. For these students, the meaning of their experience at Gordon, then, is tied to some place other than Gordon. The large cadre of younger, in-coming students seeking the first two years of a four-year degree are in a similar situation. They are taking classes (generally core requirements and pre-requisites) for the purpose of transferring. The purpose of taking classes, for these

students, is to take seemingly "higher level" (more important) classes elsewhere. For both groups, then, the meaning of their experience is removed, abstracted, distanciated from them. It is related to the economics of their job field, or to the academic standards of some other institution--some other place.

During the time of this study, I understood the official rhetoric of the institution as supporting this distanciation. In meetings and committees, counselors prompted faculty to make the connection between the students' present and future. They suggested that framing assignments within the 'someday-this-will-be-important-to-your-career' rhetoric would help make classes relevant to the students. Meanwhile, television and radio commercials for the institution sought to attract students based on their potential future success, on their potential earning power. In short, the students were being prompted elsewhere, to some other teleological point, during and even before they came to campus.

Faculty and staff were also reminded, consistently, that the academic space at Gordon was defined, in large part, by its relation to other (four-year) institutions. In department and division meetings, administration officials often reported on the status of articulation agreements with regional universities. The on-going goal was to establish transfer programs for Gordon students so that they could

continue their four-year degrees at the institution of their choice. Of course, articulation agreements with major universities were celebrated by the administration and emphasized as selling points for the quality of education at Gordon. And while such agreements benefited students, they also helped to create a sense of unsituated space at the college. Gordon, it seemed, was something to traverse.

In the Communications/Humanities department, such distanciation was felt directly by the faculty. It was well known that the department's composition program was modeled after two local universities. During discussions about student assessment, program assessment, and general pedagogical strategy, the universities were invoked consistently. In broader conversations, with deans and upper administration, about the nature of the composition program and its relationship to other programs and departments on campus, both faculty and administration grounded claims on the practices of composition programs of those universities.

Of course, any educational institution or department is contextualized by others. It is, in fact, impossible to imagine any institution, or place, which does not invoke others implicitly and explicitly, in nearly every function and modality. As Doreen Massey explains,

> There is the fact that the wider social relations in which places are set are themselves

> geographically differentiated.... There is the specificity of place which derives from the fact that each place is the focus of a distinct *mixture* of wider and more local social relations.[9]

Therefore, Gordon Community College could not be expected to enclose itself from these other institutions. And I am not suggesting here that the consistent invocation of local universities was a liability. However, the constant reference to other places, to other intellectual and geographical space, did have an effect on the students and instructors. The ultimate effect, I believe, was a sense of unsituatedness, an unsituated spatial ontology.

Nomadic Ontology

As I explained in chapters one and two, the students who constituted first-year composition classes at Gordon, during the time of this study, ranged from overworked eighteen year-olds to underpaid middle-aged parents. But what seemed to be their unifying condition was their unsituatedness in academic space. While students on traditional four-year universities (tend to) experience a residential consciousness, to some degree, the Gordon students seemed to experience a nomadic consciousness.

The Gordon students were controlled by centrifugal forces which prompted them out of place(s), and into an on-

going race through time.[10] Regardless of their age or role in life (son, mother, grandparent, laborer, nurse, etc.), a large majority of the Gordon students shared an ontology, a state of on-going and unsituated movement through time. They seemed to be racing relentlessly away from the college, away from their own presence there. Each day, the campus, for them, was something to get through. They scheduled classes adjacently, stacked as many as possible into short spans of time--often leaving only a few minutes to get across campus for their next class. An individual course, then, would only "take up" a certain window of time, and the entire college experience would only "take up" a portion of their day.

These students were experiencing, and participating in, time-space compression. As I explained in chapter three, time-space compression annihilates distance (minimizes its significance as something to traverse). But it also creates an illusion of time. As Nedra Reynolds explains, "as spaces seem to shrink, time seems to expand--and the illusion that there is more time [allows] capitalists to get more out of workers."[11] However, this principle is not only used by arch-capitalists; it is also part of a consciousness which permeates society, including colleges. It manifested in the Gordon students' lives as they attempted to squeeze a college career into being.[12]

The Spatial-Discursive Ontology of Writing

Commuter colleges, such as Gordon Community College, attract students who have opted out of traditional university settings; however, these students are finding that they must enact certain academic practices, which have been defined by the traditions of university life. In other words, community colleges are parts of a broader academic context that has been established, defined, and maintained largely by the standards and general modalities of universities. For instance, what it means to "write well" in college composition has been defined by what it means to "write well" in college composition at four-year universities. Although this seems rather banal, it is an assumption that operates implicitly in the discourses of composition studies. For instance, at Gordon Community College, the composition faculty maintained standards and practiced pedagogical strategies, which emerged out of their training at universities. In fact, many aspects of the composition program at Gordon were imported from two local universities. This is not to suggest that the process of creating the composition program at Gordon was somehow uncomplicated or uncritical. On the contrary, the Gordon program evolved out of a close examination of those programs which had previously employed much of the faculty--as either adjuncts or graduate students. Having worked at one or both of the nearby universities, the majority of the Gordon faculty assembled

what it felt to be the best or most do-able components of each program.[13]

With the distinctions between institutions, I am not suggesting that the ivory towered castles and tree-lined malls of traditional universities are implicitly superior to the office buildings and plentiful parking lots of commuter colleges. However, I am exploring what happens when a college career, traditionally conceived as a time and space of intellectual immersion, and traditionally lived out within a particular kind of (situating) geography, is defined by centrifugal ontology. More specifically, I am asking the question: What happens to writing pedagogy, and the practices of learning to write, in the absence of traditional university geography, or in the presence of unsituated academic space?[14] In other words, when the discourses of composition studies have "trickled down" from or transferred over to community colleges from universities, but have done so largely without the geographical make-up of traditional universities, what happens to writing pedagogy? What happens to the space in which the act of writing is conceived?

Writing Between a Rock and a Some-Place: Composition in Third Space

As I explain in chapter one, I sensed that something was awry with the academic space at Gordon Community College. At the time, my strategy was to "create" writing

space, to construct a material *where* for students in my composition classrooms. I prompted students to write from and about their own material/physical experiences in non-academic life, and abandoned assignments which seemed unrelated to students' material lives. In fact, during the fall 1997 semester, I renounced any prompts, and any textbooks, which did not correspond with my material emphasis. And in a textbook review, which I wrote at the end of the fall semester, I accused a prospective textbook chapter of lacking context, of perpetuating an epistemology that displaces students from themselves and their surroundings. The chapter focused on conceptions of God and enlightenment, and one of the assignments prompted students to write, in a three to five page essay, their definition of God. My comments about the assignment were rather pointed:

> Questions such as "Is God capricious" or "Is the Universe indifferent to virtue"...assume, first, that our students have the same understanding of God, of the "Universe" as traditional literary academia. I think that is a dangerous and erroneous assumption. Second, these questions do not promote a serious interactive (inter-animated) dialogue. Instead, they invite students (and teachers) to merely rehearse their conceptions of God, or even worse, to mimic the self-reflective pose of a literary or philosophical position.
>
> Certainly these questions do have value. But, as many composition and rhetoric specialists have been expressing for some time, they are not necessarily productive for a composition course... The problem with such questions...is that they assume students already possess the self-reflective voice of modernist essay writing--and that they can simply use that voice to critique and synthesize their own and others' notions of God....

Because I was convinced that students needed to locate themselves, and their writing, within material reality, within the goings-on of their daily lives, any pedagogical strategy which prompted students into a discursive vacuum

seemed inherently counter-productive. It seemed to me that students needed a *where*, a material context, from which to write and think.

For instructors like myself who are (were) determined to steep students in materiality, the Gordon students offer a valuable lesson: students are not necessarily situated in a single, coherent place (as I describe in Chapter Two). Moreover, their (our?) bodies are not necessarily a coherent, single, material location, nor do they reside without, and without the need of, rhetorical cues. In other words, *where* is not necessarily material, and *being* is not simply physical. Hence, *student writers not only require materiality; they also require textuality, and a context that facilitates the dialectical interrelation of text and material, of discourse and body*. So a writing assignment which simply prompts students to write from "where they are," from the well of some "genuine" interest, or from the practice of some non-academic vocation (such as my prompt from fall 1997), ignores the rhetorical or discursive complexities of the body. If an assignment that prompts students to explain their understanding of God errs on the side of transcendence, of the abstract realms of textuality, then an assignment that prompts students to investigate their career choice, without situating that topic in a rhetorical situation, errs on the side materiality.

Theories such as Fleckensteins and Soja's also suggest

that writing is both material and textual--that the act of writing is coextensive with the processes of being written--not only by discourses but also by materiality. For instance, the Gordon Community College students were not merely learning certain textual discourses; they were also being written by the spatiality of the campus, and by the way in which academic space was constituted in and by their personal lives. For the Gordon students, the processes of being written and the practices of learning to write seemed contradictory. There was no doubt that the students' nomadic state of being clashed with the writerly expectations in the composition classrooms, that the apparent fragmentation of their student-ness worked against the processes of composition. And, as I explain above, the geography of the Gordon campus seemed to further remove students from their own experiences at the college.

This is not to say that the problems described here, problems of academic geography, rest on the shoulders of students, that students need to situate themselves within the appropriate writerly space of the composition enterprise. This is not to say that centrifugal consciousness, or what I call unsituated ontology (above) is an inherent liability to writing, or that writing cannot be practiced in an unsituated academic setting. Unsituated ontology, however, is a liability when it is not taken as part of the space that defines writing. In other words, it is too easy to suggest

that the act of writing demands location, and so writers must learn to locate themselves within a particular (academic) place and then generate ideas accordingly. It is too easy to argue that composition students must learn how to invest themselves in traditional academic space--even if they are part of a commuter campus. It is too easy to claim that composition programs must work to provide a *where* for composition students, to resist the discourses of distanciation, and situate all writerly activities in the "here and now." Furthermore, I am not going to suggest that composition assignments must necessarily integrate the discourses of students' lives and the discourses of academia, that each assignment should be a dynamic intersection of both. Such a totalization, I think, evacuates the complexities of both academia and non-academic life.

What students do require is a way to make sense of the particular academic space that contextualizes their own writing and thinking. Students need to be placed within assignments; or, put another way, assignments need to create a *material-discursive where*. If we accept the terms of critical geographers, who argue that space and being are coupled, that, in Fleckenstein's words, "who and where (thus, what) are coextensive,"[15] then we must understand the importance of creating a *where* for our students. However, a *where* need not be traditionally academic--traditionally situated within the geography of residential consciousness.

In other words, a locateable writerly consciousness need not be a residential consciousness. The problems of dislocation, or being in a writerly nowhere, do not arise from the lack of traditional academic geography. In fact, what seems more reasonable is that *traditional academic geography often conceals the need to create a where.*

At a residential university, students (and, to some degree, instructors) exist in a shared spatial ontology, one that provides, or can provide, coherence to everyday life, and to what it means to exist/think/write in that space. They share in a real and imagined space. At a commuter campus, however, students and instructors share a sense of dispersion--of coming and going. Academic space is not contained, made to appear coherent, within a particular space. It is dispersed throughout students' (and teachers') lives, scattered among car drives, bus rides, babysitting, and multiple jobs. And, within the centrifugal dynamics of such space, a sense of where is far more difficult to generate or acquire.

Problems of dislocation, then, arise for commuter students and their teachers when the particular difficulties of creating a sense of where are overlooked. Again, it is not that a sense of where is always absent from a commuter or unsituated academic space, but it is more difficult to conjure. From the teacher's perspective, it is difficult to create a discursive context (which corresponds to a material

reality) for a diverse group of commuters who are always on their way off campus to some where else. From the student's perspective, it is difficult to transport a sense of location out of a classroom and into a continuum of otherlife--in which the classroom and all of its constituent elements are absent.

What must happen for these students, then, is a change in the metaphysics of where. Students need to conceive the space outside of the campus, outside of the classroom, as academic. And, the academic space needs to be conceived as transportable and mutable--as something that is tied to being, rather than to material surroundings exclusively. Students need to experience themselves not only as "being[s] in a material place," in Kristie Fleckenstein's words, but as beings of material-discursive place. In other words, what it means to be a student and what it means to be in an academic space need to converge--rather literally. And in that convergence, both entities will be changed.

Academic space, hence writerly space, must extend itself--not merely outward, but in all the directions of being which constitute the lives of students. In composition studies, we need to recognize the spatial complexities that define our students' (and our own) lives, but not in order to vanquish those complexities, to wish them away, but to include them in our understanding of how to write. If what it means to write is synonymous with what it

means to write in a particular place, then composition instructors (and the entire field of composition studies) need(s) to become critical geographers. We need to understand what kinds of real and imagined spaces are "out there," in the late twentieth century, what kinds of spaces constitute being "in here" (within the ontological regions of academia), and what kinds of spaces are created at the intersection.

What I am suggesting, I believe, is something that echoes of Edward Soja's *third space* (see chapter three). Third space, or lived space, explains Soja, is the region created by the juncture of "things and thought." It is "simultaneously real and imagined," where things and thought are on equal terms--where places and thoughts about places are fused, where both are always re-working one another, and most importantly here, generating possibility. [16] In other words, third space does not simply bring together the material and the conceptual.

Academic third space is born of the juncture between academic space and nomadic ontology, the region where academic space is dispersed throughout students' daily lives. Academic third space is a new dimension emergent from the generative collision of academic, domestic, and work spatialities. Students in an academic third space are the intersection of academic and non-academic spatialities--a *where* defined by their own bodies, their somatic minds,

rather than the geography of a campus or a commute. In such a space, students might be prompted not simply to learn and write about their career paths (as my students in fall 1997), but to imagine how their careers could be different, better, more humane, more ethical, more inclusive. They might be prompted to discover the relationship between their career choice and their home life, to understand how the components of a (seemingly) nomadic life impact, and might impact, one another. Moreover, such an assignment would emerge from a particular discursive context (generated in a classroom or virtual classroom space); it would be precipitated by readings, discussion, and research that would help constitute the imagined, the possible.

Regardless of the specific assignment, the act of writing must be contextualized by students' academic and non-academic lives. For example, in a writing course for fall 1999, my Composition 111 students will be asked to write an argument paper, a standard assignment for first-year college writing courses. They will be asked to read a variety of essays on education in America. And in what amounts to standard practice for writing pedagogy, the students will then have in-class group discussions about the issues raised in the essays, a necessary step for establishing a rhetorical context for their own positions. But the pre-text will not stop there. Students will then carry the discussion with them out of the classroom, into the places which constitute

their non-academic lives. They will be asked to interview at least two people (who consistently share in their daily lives at home, work, etc.) about the issues raised in the essays and class discussions. The information/opinions from these interviews will then be reported to the class, and must be used as part of their arguments--as evidence of opinion. The writing prompt, then, will not simply ask students to "form an opinion" but to argue for or against the validity of others' opinions.

Such an assignment, I believe, invites students to see themselves, their own bodies, as the intersection between academia and non-academic life. It provides a conceptual place (a topic) while also prompting students to make meaning out of the people-places that constitute their daily lives. More assignments which provide such conceptual-material space might resemble the following:

- A "Critique" essay assignment prompts students to formally evaluate a short expository text on the nature of work in American culture. In addition to formally analyzing the features of the text, students are to argue for the validity of the claims made based on their experiences at work. Students might be prompted to interview people at their place of employment, asking co-workers to respond to claims made in the text.

- A "Remembering" essay assignment prompts students to return to the home where they grew up, take a photo of the yard, the garage, the patio, etc. and then tell a story about that particular image. The advantage to this assignment is that it generates "real and imagined" moments of spatiality.
- An "Investigation" assignment begins with readings on community activists. The students are then prompted to find the names of city, district, state and federal officials elected to serve their community. They are to report this information on fliers to their neighbors.

Politics of Academic Third Space

What is politically engaging about writing in academic third space is that it grants students space. Commuter students, like those at Gordon Community College, often work without a sense of location; they carry on "in the absence of a proper focus," according to Michel de Certeau's terms (see my discussion in chapter three). They must resort to *tactical* behavior, which is reactionary, isolated, and unplanned. That is, they must conjure ways to successfully carry on academic practices. Because they do not "possess" an academic territory, they are left without a "base" while instructors (at least, fulltime faculty), who are situated within the institution, act *strategically*; they have a "base" from which to manage relations.[17]

In a writing class, I believe, this dichotomy plays out in a way that disenfranchises students. Their work is isolated in fragmented moments of thought; it does not, quite often, extend beyond the classroom, into space that is familiar. In other words, when students are at the college, and mired in the work of composition, they are in *terra incognito*, in a space which is not theirs. However, students writing in academic third space are at the crossroads of the familiar and the unfamiliar. Their writing emerges from the social, academic, domestic, and work spaces of their lives. *They work strategically because they are, themselves, a base, and tactically because they are mired in various locations.*

Such a space generates possibilities for invention. In third space, where students are both strategic and tactical, their (familiar) everyday lives provide discourse that is revised by the potentially unfamiliar, by what can be imagined. The act of writing, then, can be the act of revising the familiar, and real-izing the imagined.

[1] See Massey, Space, Place, and Gender, 155.

[2] See Cassell, Geography, Ideology, and Transgression, 16.

[3] Qtd. in Cassell, 17.

[4] In using the term, "situated," I do not mean to invoke the poststructuralist debate about situated or foundational knowledge (see Stanley Fish, "Anti-Foundationalism, Theory Hope, and the Teaching of Composition"). While the relationship between geographical situatedness and disciplinary situatedness is at the center of my argument in this chapter, the pertinent issue here is not so much the epistemology of different disciplines, but the broader context of the academic setting.

[5] Certeau, 115.

[6] Certeau, 130.

[7] Certainly, characterizing an entire space as situated or unsituated tends toward essentialism. And the above descriptions are not intended to catagorize community colleges as unsituated, and universities as situated academic sapce; nor do I want to construct a clear distinction between situated and unsituated space. As I explain in the following section, and later in this chapter, every place is filled with multiple projections about its qualities, and those projections (and the qualities themselves) are dynamic, shifting endlessly.

[8] As explained in chapter three, Anthony Giddens explains distanciation as the processes by which time and place are removed from individual experience.

[9] Massey, Space, Place, and Gender, 155-6.

[10] See "Capitalism, Control, and Space" section in chapter three, which outlines the arguments of Henri LeFebvre, Anthony Giddens, and David Harvey, among others. These theorists contend that capitalism in America worked to annihilate not only the productivity of local places, but also the idea or value of place while universalizing time.

[11] Reynolds, 17.

[12] The illusion that such a feat can and should be accomplished was, of course, not entirely that of the students. It was driven indirectly by the broader discourses of capitalism that urge an ever-increasing amount of productivity out of individuals, and directly by the discourses of the college that attract students into a commuter college career.

[13] See Appendix A for sample course information.

[14] I am suggesting here that unsituated academic space is not necessarily a lack of situated space. It is not an empty space; rather, it is filled with the discourses of distanciation and dislocation.

[15] Fleckenstein, 286.

[16] See Soja, Postmodern Geographies, 131-7.

[17] De Certeau, 35-6

CHAPTER FIVE.
COMING TO TERMS WITH ACADEMIC THIRD SPACE

> I define the Placeless Society as the awakening omnipresence that will allow everything--people, goods, resources, knowledge--to be available anywhere, often instantaneously, with little regard for distance or place. We already see it in many forms. CNN broadcasts bring an Ethiopian drought into lush living rooms. Multinational appliance companies subcontract manufacturing to wherever it is cheapest. Capital ebbs and flows freely around the girth of the globe defying government controls. ...Everywhere, people, money, goods, and knowledge flow so effortlessly from point to point that place becomes an irrelevant concept. The world is becoming placeless.
>
> From Bold New World, William Knoke

In Bold New World, William Knoke argues that the human species is bound for a leap into the fourth dimension, a space that is, essentially, placeless. Within three decades, he claims, humanity will be fully mired in an "Age of Everything-Everywhere."[1] And, as in previous dimensional shifts in our history (which are defined, in Knoke's terms, by humanity's increasing ability to traverse space), the leap into the fourth dimension will not only change commerce and governmental institutions, but will also re-structure everyday life--and what it means to be alive in a society. Referring to hundreds of corporate and government-sponsored projects, which are already realizing Knoke's vision of the

future, he describes an impending era of global labor, global citizenry, telepresence, virtual sex, telecombat, virtual science, virtual shopping and virtual education.

Of course, we cannot simply accept meta-narratives such as Knoke's without a certain amount of cynicism. The naming of any global "era" is doomed to over-generalization and various faulty assumptions about the nature of time and history. And despite an apparent trajectory toward placelessness, we cannot get too carried away in futurism. Although the notion of an entirely placeless society conjures appropriately shocking visions of the future (has anyone ever argued for a moderate-looking future?), we cannot accept the idea of complete placelessness when we also consider the complexities of place. As I argue in Chapters Three and Four, any place is at once real and imagined, material and discursive, concrete and conceptual. So, while we may be on the verge of a materially-placeless society, we are, at the same time, entering an age when place is increasingly imagined, increasingly discursive, increasingly rhetorical. In other words, place is not necessarily disappearing, but its qualities are shifting. A virtual place is still a place. It has a geography. It is a projection of an ideology.[2] Like any "real" or material place, a virtual

place is a manifestation of an ideal way to live or think, and in turn, it projects a way to live and think. And those manifestations are still, and will continue to be, real points, or in Henri Lefebvre's terms, real "moments" of spatiality.[3]

Although Knoke's characterization of a completely placeless future is perhaps a bit over-zealous, the sheer abundance of examples in Bold New World is suggestive. In his illustration of an increasingly placeless world, he references countless corporations and small businesses working to capitalize on the looming shift to virtual life. He also refers to religious institutions, terrorist groups, agriculture, medical practice--nearly every conceivable modality of living in a modern society--as catalysts of the turn toward complete placelessness. Even the most cynical reader must accept a rather overwhelming inevitability in the shifting qualities of space.

For those of us in higher education, Knoke's message is entirely relevant. We cannot expect to carry on the practice of teaching with the same pedagogical tools or epistemological grounds that have defined college and university life for the majority of the twentieth century.

What it means to learn, and to apply what is learned, will change radically.

Composition Studies' Place in the Future

In the past decade, perhaps the most vitalizing force in composition studies has been the fusion of technology and writing instruction. In fact, the on-line, or virtual, revolution has been partly responsible for a renewed interest in writing space. Because the entire material dimension of writing/thinking/communicating on-line is different from the traditional dimensions (paper and pen, typewriter, or even word processors), it draws attention to its own spatiality. In other words, on-line writing space (moos, muds, chat rooms, listservs, etc.) is not *transparent*; it is *apparent*, noteworthy of discussing and theorizing. And in being apparent, it has suggested alternatives for being students and teachers of writing.

While many theorists have called computer-supported writing environments places of egalitarian exchange, or "linguistic utopias,"[4] in Mary Louise Pratt's words, many others insist that computer-supported environments (listservs, muds, moos, chat rooms, etc.) simply re-constitute the same kinds of oppression and dominance carried

on in traditionally material settings.[5] But what seems most important, outside of that debate, is that the space itself is being contested. The space does not simply exist as a template for sociality. In fact, as the debates over the nature of on-line writing space suggest, the representation of space is vital to what it means to be in that space. And the representation of that space changes practice.[6] The emergence of computer-supported writing environments has thus brought attention to the intricacies of the spatial ontology of writing.

In the same way that composition studies has begun the exploration of virtual and on-line writing spaces, the field needs to make the same critical exploration of a new and expansive kind of space: the unsituated spaces of commuter colleges and commuter students. We need to explore what it means to be and write outside of situated academia, and its attending geography.

One of the texts that helped to shape the geography of composition studies is Stephen North's The Making of Knowledge in Composition Studies: Portrait of an Emerging Field, in which North introduces the idea of a distinct kind of teacher/practitioner knowledge, which he deems "lore." North explains this body of knowledge as an emerging

structure, one that takes its shape from everyday teacherly work:

> I like to think of it in architectural terms, The House of Lore, as it were: a rambling, to my mind delightful old manse, wing branching off from wing, addition tacked to addition, in all sorts of materials--brick, wood, canvas, sheet metal, cardboard--with turrets and gables, minarets and spires, spiral staircases, rope ladders, pitons, dungeons, secret passageways--all seemingly random, yet all connected. Each generation of Practitioners inherits this pile from the one before, is ushered around some of what there is, and then, in its turn, adds on its own touches. Naturally, the structure is huge, sprawling. There are, after all, no provisions for tearing any of it down. Various portions of it can and almost certainly will be "forgotten" and "rediscovered" again and again. A wing abandoned by one generation will be resettled (and maybe refurbished) by another. And note, too, that there is nothing to rule out parallel discovery or re-

> invention, either; so the House of Lore has many rooms that look very much alike.[7]

The important feature about North's House of Lore, for a field constituted by theories of pedagogy, is that it celebrates the idea that knowledge is made from teacherly practice. Lore knowledge is born out of the dynamics of everyday work. His conception of academic knowledge, then, bestows a sense of value and worth to that which is de-valued in traditional university settings.[8]

North's metaphor also suggests a certain inter-relatedness among all composition pedagogies. Because the House is one "pile," one structure, it suggests that all composition pedagogy emerges from the same ground. In many ways, such a suggestion may be correct. In fact, I believe that much of the work that is done in composition pedagogy is (and has been) informed by a particular conception of academic space--one that is constituted by the geography of university life--hence, by residential consciousness which prevails at traditional universities. In other words, *the House of Lore that composition pedagogy has traditionally occupied has been raised by the material(ity) of university instruction, and by the spatial ontology of university life.* As I explain throughout the dissertation, much of the

present practice in composition pedagogy emerges from our understanding of college students as being, essentially, coherent individuals who have left behind a non-academic life and migrated into the intellectual geography of a four-year institution. Commuter students and commuter ontology have not been important elements in figuring the shape of our pedagogical House.

However, the demographics of present college life are bound to change (and are changing) the grounds upon which much pedagogical practice has been built. The House may not be coming down, but many of its parts, I believe, will soon be on rather shaky ground. The statistical trends in higher education illustrate a drastic shift away from the "traditional" college student, the eighteen-year-old recently graduated from high school and immersing him/herself in a four-year university education. First, and most significantly, is the sheer number of students at community colleges in the U.S. Consistently, since the 1970's, community college students have constituted approximately one-third (or slightly below one-third) of all college students.[9] (See Appendix C.) And the majority of community college students, 65%, are part-time. (See Appendix D.) And with these trends comes a change in the average college student age. Although the majority of community college

students have been eighteen and nineteen year-olds, those students are nearly matched in number by students in their thirties.[10] (See Appendix E.) And as the age of students goes up, the number of full-time students goes down. In fact, since the early 1970's, college students have consistently migrated toward part-time status. According to Cohen and Brawer:

> In the early 1970's one-half of the [community college] students were full-timers; by the mid 1980's only one third were.... In 1986, just over one-fourth of the one million students in California were enrolled for more than twelve units, while nearly half were taking fewer than six units.... Nationwide more than one-third of the students were enrolled for fewer than six units in 1993.[11]

Also, community colleges, and their strategies for attracting part-time students, are not simply attracting more students; they are also helping to change the nature of instruction. Because community colleges are attempting to reach a non-traditional student population (people who would

not otherwise attend college without a variety of access routes), community college faculty tend to explore new technologies and alternative instructional methods. The vast majority of U.S. community colleges (87.4% in 1996) use satellite teleconferencing, and nearly half of all U.S. community colleges (49.8% in 1996) use two-way video in classroom instruction.[12] Community colleges also tend to emphasize service learning strategies (instructional methods which actively involve students in the surrounding community). In a 1996 survey, 77% of all U.S. community colleges either had service learning in place or were interested in implementing such programs.[13] And certainly it is safe to assume that these percentages have increased in the past three years.

What this all means, I believe, is that the very nature of academic space is changing. It is not simply the integration of technology that is promoting this spatial evolution; rather, it is an emerging consciousness which sees fewer spatial impediments in the geography of everyday life. An increasing number and an expanding demographic of students is coming to college. And many of those students are community college/commuter students; they are part-time; they are on campus sporadically, or not at all. Academic space,

then, is being constructed by the centrifugal forces of an increasingly distant and nomadic student population. *Academic space is, increasingly, a space of coming and going.*

As I hope this chapter illustrates, we can no longer imagine academic space as centripetal space--an inside or center that attracts people into its systems. Nor can we be afraid of the centrifugal forces of our students' otherlives. Instead, we must imagine an alternative beyond the inside/outside, centripetal/centrifugal dualisms. As Edward Soja argues, we must learn to think in terms of *third space*, of a realm of generative possibility outside of, but also inclusive of, those terms and categories that seem to lock us into dichotomy:

> Thinking trialectically is a necessary part of understanding Thirdspace as a limitless composition of lifeworlds that are radically open and openly radicalizable; that are all-inclusive and transdisciplinary in scope yet politically focused and susceptible to strategic choice; that are never completely knowable but whose knowledge nonetheless guides our search for emancipatory change and freedom from domination. Trialectical

> thinking is difficult, for it challenges all conventional modes of thought and taken-for-granted epistemologies. It is disorderly, unruly, constantly evolving, unfixed, never presentable in permanent constructions.[14]

Donna Haraway's conception of the cyborg, I believe, illustrates such thinking. Rather than reify the dualism between human and machine, and the cultural anxieties born from that dualism, Haraway imagines the generative intersection of the two entities:

> There are several consequences to talking seriously the imagery of cyborgs as other than our enemies. Our bodies, ourselves; bodies are maps of power and identity. Cyborgs are no exception. A cyborg body is not innocent; it was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end (or until the world ends); it takes irony for granted. One is too few, and two is only one possibility. Intense pleasure in skill, and machine skill, ceases to be a sin, but an aspect of embodiment. The machine is

> not an *it* to be animated, worshipped or dominated. The machine is us, our process, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; they do not dominate or threaten us. We are responsible for boundaries. We are they.[15]

Haraway's understanding is a marriage of indicative and subjunctive. It oversteps fear and anxiety, and finds generative energy. Her thinking is trialectical; her cyborg exists in third space.

In the same way that Haraway expresses the intersection of machine and body, the intersection of emerging space can be expressed:

> ...[space] is not an *it* to be animated, worshipped or [annihilated]. The [space] is us, our process, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for [spaces]; they do not dominate or threaten us. We are responsible for boundaries. We are they.

In other words, those of us teaching writing in spaces that appear fundamentally different from our own training need not be threatened by nomadic fragmentation, by a prevailing sense

of unsituatedness. Instead, we should become part of these spaces. And given the present momentum of change in education, in writing environments, in commuter campuses and the general real-ization of nomadic ontology, it seems necessary for us to live and practice in spaces projected by such thinking.

What this means for writing instruction is a vast re-thinking of the theory and practices which have grounded the field in its present form. As the nature of space in higher education continues to transform (continues to become less and less situated), the most basic assumptions about being a composition student and instructor will become increasingly less fixed. One such assumption about the daily practice of composition is that classrooms constitute being "in composition." The idea is that composition class is a particular place. Instructors and students alike say, "I'm going *to* comp class," or, "I can't wait to get the hell *out of* comp class."

While in class, instructors prompt students into certain activities that are designed to make them better writers and thinkers. The field (or house) of composition is filled with nifty in-class pedagogical tools: workshops, peer editing, debates, informal discussion, impromptu writing, small group

discussion, conferences, etc. In the present house of composition, these pedagogical tools, and the perspectives which give them meaning, constitute the mainstay of daily practice. However, they will increasingly become only a particular (and maybe a particularly small) component of writing pedagogy. As the percentage of commuter students rises throughout higher education, and students are less situated in the classroom, instructors will have to conceive of activities that prompt students into writerly behavior outside of the classroom. Such activities might not "look like" the traditional student behavior of situated academic settings. They might prompt students to write an essay with a non-student (with a "peer" who is defined as such because of his/her working or social relationship with the student). They might prompt students to discuss or debate with people off campus. They might even be so bold as to have a non-academic (someone off campus) evaluate students' texts. While workshopping and peer editing may always be valued practices in the composition classroom, instructors will have to prompt students into new kinds of reflection, invention, planning, etc. These behaviors will fundamentally include all facets of the students' lives.

The implications for such thinking are far-reaching. As

the practices of composition pedagogy become increasingly defined by an emerging academic third space, so too will the study of rhetoric. The study of invention, for instance, will involve the study of space and perhaps the analysis of particular places--and the relationships between consciousness, discourse, and place. Perhaps invention will be seen not only as a social act (as Karen Burke LeFevbre has taught us) but also a spatial act--one precipitated by, and emergent from, geographies of daily life.

As space becomes an increasingly apparent phenomenon in higher education (and particularly in composition studies), perhaps students in situated academic settings will be more prompted to explore the nature of academic space--and non-academic space. That is, students of composition and rhetoric (at all educational levels) might be prompted to examine the differences and similarities between academic and non-academic space. They might be prompted to find meaning in the relationship between campus buildings and surrounding neighborhoods, between academic institutions and local businesses, college clubs and "townie" bars. In this way, students might begin to understand how academic space works.

And as students traverse the academic/non-academic boundaries of daily life, and are called on to explore those

boundaries, they will inevitably encounter new problems, some of which may look like old problems--the specters of long-standing debates in composition studies. But it is my guess that new understandings of space will re-animate old problems. For instance, the issue of power in the classroom (made relevant by theorists such as Patricia Bizzell[16]) might well become an issue of power as it functions in all dimensions of students' lives. The discussion about power and voice, in other words, which focused attention on teacher verses student empowerment, might well be re-animated. Scholars of composition studies might explore how power relations function through time (a daily schedule) and space (a daily commute) to impact the lives of students. They might focus on the way campus geography (or the geography surrounding campus) influences students' access to power.

Class time will also extend beyond traditional constraints. As students take composition with them out the door and off campus, they will spread the work of composition class throughout their lives--throughout their schedules. What this means is that the notion of being a composition student will extend out of traditional academic space--and will redefine traditional academic ontology. Academic time/space will, by necessity, seep into the various spaces

of students' non-academic lives.

My point in suggesting any of the potential trajectories for composition theory and research is that the field is bound to expand outside of itself. My guess (my hope) is that as academic space becomes less framed by the traditional boundaries of classroom space (and time), academic perspectives will become less provincial. While it has certainly been a catalyst of transdisciplinarity, the field has remained focused largely on its own grounds--making claims about its place in the institution or about its primary subject: first-year writing students. (This is evidenced by two of the field's most praised and cited books in the 1990's: Susan Miller's Textual Carnivals: The Politics of Composition, and Lester Faigley's Fragments of Rationality: Postmodernity and the Subject of Composition.) But as that primary subject becomes increasingly less situated (more transient) and less apt to be freeze-framed by the research agendas of the field, the field itself will necessarily become less situated. That is, *it will learn to make claims less about the nature of itself and more about the spaces outside of itself.*

As composition studies spreads out (so to speak), it will undoubtedly reclaim spatial terms and concepts from the

rhetorical tradition.[17] And as rhetoric (the study of the means of persuasion) merges with geography (the study of socio-spatiality), the result will be a perspective which understands *how space persuades identity into being*. As academic space becomes increasingly apparent (that is, less transparent), space will come to mean and function in ways we have not yet imagined. Already, space is seen as rhetorical. In the often-cited discussion between Lloyd Bitzer, Richard Vatz, and Scott Consigny, rhetorical theory and composition studies came to understand the rhetoric of situation. In Consigny's response to Bitzer and Vatz, he articulates a dynamic in which situation and rhetor are both, in a sense, created by one another:

> The rhetorical situation is an indeterminate context marked by troublesome disorder which the rhetor must structure so as to disclose and formulate problems; hence Bitzer errs in construing the situation as determinate and predetermining a "fitting" response. But the situation is not one created solely through the imagination and discourse of the rhetor. It involves particularities of persons, actions, and agencies in a certain place and time; and the rhetor cannot ignore

> these constraints if he[/she] is to function effectively. Hence Vatz errs in construing the rhetor as completely free to create his[/her] own exigencies at will and select his subject matter in a manner of "pure arbitration."[18]

Particular places, then, shape the imagination. The real "persons, actions, and agencies" of a particular place establish what is/can be said, while what is said establishes meaning for a particular place. Like Soja's understanding of third space, Consigny sees the generative capacity of place.[19]

Given our roots in rhetorical theory, and the present (rhetorical) situation of composition studies, it is safe to assume that the study of rhetoric and composition will become increasingly affiliated with the study of space--and even with the perspective of critical geographers. Patricia Harkin even suggests that the new theorists of composition studies will be cartographers, mapping the relations of a postdisciplinary kind of knowledge-making, one that emerges from the particular sites of teaching.[20]

But, while it seems like a logical step for composition theorists to take on issues of spatiality, the above forecast

for the field is indeed one which ignores gloomy possibilities. While it is entirely possible that a new sense of space (and an increasingly complicated spatial ontology) will come about, the field might also follow more dubious trajectories. It might, that is, be shaped by the cultural and economic forces which have devoured the importance of particular places, and which have evacuated the meaning of education outside of economic ascendancy and skilled labor.

A Haunted House of Composition

Presently, many of the part-time students who enter community colleges such as Gordon are part of a particular socio-economic dynamic, one that both feeds a large pool of low-wage employment and promotes the ascension of skilled labor. The economy has generated millions of part-time-ish jobs that pay employees enough to lease a new Dodge Neon, or the like, while attending classes at a local community college and that promise higher pay and quasi-benefits to employees seeking two-year degrees. The economy has also created the (apparent) need for a growing skilled labor and service-labor force: computer programmers, dental hygienists, nursing assistants, marketing specialists, administrative

assistants, and technicians in all forms. Community colleges have responded to that need by creating programs that are directly linked to (often funded and sponsored by) corporations in need of skilled-labor pools.

In this process, community colleges directly support the economic climate and stimulate a set of ideas about the intersection of skilled labor and education. In responding to and supporting the vicissitudes of skilled-labor, community college space has become increasingly enveloped (or defined) by corporations and industries. Many colleges, such as Gordon, promote themselves as institutions inextricably bound to local and regional industry; they, in fact, beckon potential students by advertising pictures of graduates working "in the field."

Certainly, the convergence of community colleges and businesses is not, altogether, a bad marriage. In fact, it could be argued that community colleges are leading higher education into a less geocentric space--a space in which academic knowledge is always being contextualized, and maybe even democratized.[21] However, when the concept of college education becomes bound to the concept of skilled labor, there are some negative implications as well. At a broad level, the union suggests that college education is a

preliminary, an introductory step on the staircase of the corporate world. And, more dubiously, the union might suggest to students, administrators, and even faculty that knowledge is an epistemological package, a set of behaviors that can be certified--a sentiment which already resounds too loudly in academia.

Moreover, when the academic terrain surrounding composition classes is defined primarily by its relation to a business/industrial complex, the value of composition courses is defined by their relevance to business and industry. This manifest in the daily need for composition instructors to justify, for their students, the need to write in full sentences, and for writing program administrators to justify, for their deans, hiring full-time instructors. In other words, it is difficult to carry out the enterprise of composition (at every level) when the academic space surrounding it seems to contradict its most basic goals. In this space, composition is in danger of becoming enveloped by the epistemology of skilled labor, of becoming a discipline of demonstrable and certifiable skills. If composition becomes linked with (or even bullied by) the epistemology of skilled labor, it might be swayed into increased uniformity. Writing may be seen only as a behavior to communicate what is

already known (having been handed down by superiors or generated by scientific protocol). Writing in modes (explanation, description, narration, argumentation) may be seen as far more valuable than calls for alternative forms of writing/thinking.[22] In short, current-traditional pedagogy[23] (that set of practices which emphasizes, among other things, standardized modes of writing and linearity of the writing process) will resonate with the larger educational goal of creating skilled labor for business and industry.

And in the obsessive and self-perpetuating race to attract monies to their colleges (via corporate funding and FTE's, as well as individual student bodies), administrators might be lulled into curtailing curriculum according to the (real and imagined) needs of business. The value of courses, including composition, might be defined by their role in making students more overtly and certifiably "skilled." In such a scenario, it is not inconceivable that composition courses be seen as grammatical help-labs for struggling technology students, or even worse, that they be seen as service courses to the entire academic landscape.[24]

Of course, this is a nightmarish possibility. Like C. Jan Swearingen's "ultimate nightmare," in which she envisions composition students taught Suzuki[25] style in large football

stadiums, my scenario will probably not come to fruition in the near future (at least not in these overtly recognizable forms). But what is perhaps more insidious is that such homogenizing methodology is apt to creep into the practice of (and justification for) composition. If current trends in college demographics are any indication, community colleges will continue to attract growing numbers of part-time students. And those community colleges will continue to be supported by the larger cultural and economic valuation of skilled labor. In such an academic space, it may become increasingly difficult to characterize composition courses as places of "cultural criticism,"[26] in David Bartholomae's words, or agents of a "democratic educational mission," in James Berlin's words.[27] That is, if the desire of in-coming students (potential customers for up-start community colleges) is to get in, get out, and get a guaranteed skilled-labor job, then the need for composition courses, as anything other than skill training, could be seen as superfluous.

And perhaps the impact of skilled-labor education has already begun to influence the practice of composition--not necessarily the scholars of composition theory, but the practitioners of college writing instruction. Perhaps the

conceptual gaps between the claims of composition scholars and the claims of community college composition instructors (see chapter two) suggest something about the forces presently impacting college writing instruction. Perhaps the fact that community college composition instructors do not have the time or financial support to ruminate about the direction of "the field" suggests that composition studies is, in fact, an academic space operating under the epistemology of skilled labor. Perhaps the fact that the vast majority of composition courses are taught by part-time instructors, while the vast majority of published claims about composition studies are made by tenured university professors, suggests something about the nature of the field itself.

Certainly, anyone teaching in the field of composition studies knows the bifurcation between the practitioners and scholars. Despite loads of rhetoric about the integration of practice and theory, the gap between those practicing writing pedagogy and those publishing claims about writing pedagogy seems to be increasing. While scholars of composition celebrate the field as one of cultural criticism and democratic revivalism, the practitioners whimper from beneath stacks and stacks of student essays. Essentially, the

practitioners are faced with the grizzly demands of daily commutes, daily assignments, and unsatisfied students. They feel the impact of colleges and universities' marketing strategies, ads which cast college as the gateway to financial independence. They exist in the indicative mood--what composition *is*, while the scholars of the field, for the most part, exist in the subjunctive--what composition *could-be*. While the practitioners scurry throughout corridors of the house of composition in an eerily voiceless dance of daily regime, the scholars are manifested only in voice; they are bodiless proclamations which echo throughout the rooms.

If this is the condition of our house, what we need, then, is a good exorcism, not necessarily a purging of specters, but a process in which the voiceless gain the ability to speak, and the bodiless take on corporal form. As I explain throughout this chapter, composition studies will necessarily have to address the increasing number and role of community colleges and commuter students in academia. It will not be productive or valuable to simply resist emerging spatial ontologies, nor to simply denounce the convergence of education and business. We cannot take a modernist rebel stance against the outside--corporations and industries seeking to invest capital and ideology in education.

However, we can insist that composition practitioners help to define the space that is created at the juncture of college and business worlds. That is, we can focus our collective gaze on the emerging spaces of community colleges, and the spatial ontologies which will continue to grow throughout academia, and give the growing numbers of instructors and students in those spaces more opportunities to speak, more opportunities to make meaning in the increasingly unsituating spaces of college education.

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[1] Knoke, 46.

[2] See Cresswell, in chapter three.

[3] See Edward Soja, Third Space, 64-8.

[4] Qtd. In Selfe and Selfe, 483.

[5] See Selfe and Selfe, 485-94.

[6] See Denis Lester Faigley, "Beyond Imagination: The Internet and Global Digital Literacy," in Hawisher and Selfe, Passions, Pedagogies, and 21st Century Technologies.

[7] North, 27.

[8] And the field's scholars (another of North's constitutive groups) has accepted the terms of lore as theory. Patricia Harkin refers to lore as postdisciplinary knowledge-making. See Harkin, "The Postdisciplinary Politics of Lore."

[9] National Profile of Community Colleges, 24.

[10] Ibid., 25.

[11] Cohen and Brawer, The American Community College, 42-3.

[12] National Profile of Community Colleges, 67.

[13] Ibid., 66.

[14] Soja, Third Space, 70.

[15] Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature, 180.

[16] See Bizzell, "The Ethos of Academic Discourse."

[17] Of course, such reclamation has been underway for quite some time. *Kairos*, for instance, has been making a come back from classical rhetoric. Although not directly spatial, the term connotes the *appropriate* or *most opportune time* for action (primarily, rhetorical action). Such a focus on particular time or opportunity prompts recognition of particular place. Theorists such as James Kinneavy have sought to put kairos in the forefront of rhetorical scholarship, and ultimately into the practices of teaching.

[18] Consigny, "Rhetoric and Its Situations," 178.

[19] However, while the focus of the Bitzer/Vatz/Consigny discussion emphasizes the discursive freedom and limitations of the rhetor in a given place (situation), the focus of geo-theorists such as Soja is the process in which consciousness, even existence, emerges out of place.

[20] Harkin, "The Postdisciplinary Politics of Lore," 136.

[21] See Nell Ann Pickett, "The Two-Year College as Democracy in Action."

[22] See Lillian Bridwell-Bowles.

[23] See Sharon Crowley's The Methodical Memory: Invention in Current-Traditional Rhetoric.

[24] I hope the irony is not lost here.

[25] The Suzuki method is "adapted for young children to learn basic techniques and chords in very large goups through repetition and memorization" (Swearingen 80).

[26] Batholomae, "What is Composition?"21.

[27] Berlin, "English Studies, Work, and Politics," 225.

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APPENDIX A.
COMPOSITION COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

ENG 111
Sample Course Syllabus (Partial)

Prerequisite: ENG 101 or equivalent
Credit Hours: 3
Instructor: Johnathon Mauk
Office: CH 140-K
Hours: TBA
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Course Description: This course will offer students instruction in writing clear, concise expository prose, and will focus on the importance of such effective communication. Students' expository writing will be generated from their analysis of specific assignments and from other materials as indicated by the instructor. Specifically, emphasized are "writing as a process" techniques, audience and purpose analysis, and rhetorical modes and techniques. Instruction also emphasizes the development of accurate, interesting sentence structure and precise, expressive word choice.

Texts:

- Fulwiler, Toby and Alan R. Hayakawa. The Blair Handbook. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1997.

- Raicu, Irina L. and Gregory Grewell. Transitions: Lives in America. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1997.

General Objective: The general objective is to offer the student instruction in writing clear, concise exposition. Students will be expected to use accurate, interesting sentence structure and precise, forceful word choice in writing assignments. The emphasis will be on developing effective analysis, organization and content of essays.

Specific Learning Objectives:

- Students will write expository essays which demonstrate coherence and sound paragraph development.
- Students will practice, in both in-class and out-of-class assignments, the technique of logical organization and development.

- Students will continue to develop sentence variety and word choice skills both in exercises and in writing assignments.
- Students will practice and become proficient in "writing as process" techniques: pre-writing, drafting, revising, proofreading, and editing.
- Students will become proficient in audience and purpose analysis.

General Classroom Procedures: We will work on writing at all levels: from the entire text to individual paragraphs, sentences, and clauses. As you examine the syllabus, you will notice pre-writing and rough draft assignments; these are essential to development of the final essays. Occasionally, on days that rough drafts are due, we will conduct workshops in which each student will get writing advice/assistance from others in the class. Throughout the semester, these workshops will be increasingly important to the development of your assignments--and your abilities as a critical reader. You must participate in the workshops; they will help you to better understand the processes of re-vision.

Occasionally, I will set aside class time to lecture on various writing/revising strategies. But, for the most part, the class is designed for students to be actively engaged in discussion and writing activities. Each student should engage all aspects of the course (reading assignments, writing workshops, student/teacher conferences, class discussion) and seek my assistance frequently throughout the semester.

Workshops: For some writing assignments, we will use workshopping strategies for revision and editing. To these ends, each student should form a collaborative relationship with other students. On workshop days, students will read and respond to rough drafts. These workshops are to be approached with energy and focus. Points will be awarded to all students' collaborative efforts. (I will provide specific strategies for workshopping.)

Assessment: Student papers will be evaluated according to the procedures set forth by the evaluation criteria established for ENG 111. Written work, tests and/or quizzes, and class participation will provide the basis for the course grade:

Quizzes/Workshops	10%
Remembering Essay	15%
Investigating Essay	15%
Arguing Essay I	20%
Arguing Essay II	20%
Problem Solving Essay	20%

ENG 112
Sample Course Syllabus (Partial)

Prerequisite: ENG 111 or equivalent
Credit Hours: 3
Instructor: Johnathon Mauk
Office: CH 140-K
Hours: TBA

****

Course Description: Composition II is a directed composition course which continues the process of learning to write clear, concise, effective prose that was started in Composition I. Students will learn to write summary, critique, and synthesis essays leading to a researched and documented argumentation essay. The critical analysis of ideas and "writing as a process" will be emphasized. An oral presentation will be completed in the course.

Texts

- Behrens, Laurence and Leonard J. Rosen. Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum. 6th ed. New York: Longman, 1997.

- Fulwiler, Toby and Alan R. Hayakawa. The Blair Handbook. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1997.

General Objective: To enhance the written communication and research skills of all students to the level required for future academic and world of work activities.

Specific Objectives:

- Students will develop their material and organize it in a coherent style. They will make points effectively,

develop them with relevant and convincing evidence, and arrange and connect support smoothly and logically. Students will develop their abilities to observe, define, synthesize, and reason logically.

- In each writing project, students will analyze their purpose and the character of their audience and practice effective problem analysis in order to be able to use the most effective language for the problem to be solved and for their audience.
- In addition to the continued use of fact and example, students will master more advanced uses of classification, definition, and division, and use effectively the techniques of comparison and persuasion.
- Students will master the skills of effective research and correctly document the facts and ideas that they use in their writing.
- Students will incorporate all skills learned in ENG 111 and ENG 112 into research papers.
- Students will demonstrate effective writing, speaking, and critical thinking skills.
- As in Composition I, students will to develop skills of grammatical construction and usage, and they will be expected to demonstrate these in all written work.

General Classroom Procedures and Activities: Classes will consist of group discussion, peer workshops, and in-class writing. Occasionally, I will set aside class time to lecture on various writing/revising strategies. But, for the most part, the class is designed for students to be actively engaged in discussion and writing activities. Throughout the semester, the class will develop as a writing community out of which students' individual writing strategies will emerge. Students should engage all aspects of the course (reading assignments, writing workshops, student/teacher conferences, class discussion) and seek my assistance frequently throughout the semester.

Workshops: For formal writing assignments, we will use workshopping strategies for revision and editing. To these ends, each student should form a collaborative relationship with two other students. On workshop days, students will read and respond to rough drafts. These workshops are to be approached with energy and focus. (I will provide specific strategies for workshopping.)

Assessment: Student papers will be evaluated according to the procedures set forth by the evaluation criteria established for ENG 112. Written work, an oral presentation, and class participation will provide the basis for the course grade:

In-Class Assignments/Quizzes	10%
Oral Presentation	10%
Summary	10%
Critique	15%
Synthesis	15%
Research Proposal (including bibliography)	15%
Extended Research Argument Paper	25%

APPENDIX B. SURVEY QUESTIONS

WRITING IN PLACE:
A STORY OF GEOGRAPHY AND COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY
Proposed Dissertation by Johnathon Mauk
Bowling Green State University
Department of English
Graduate School

1. What is your goal as a composition instructor? That is, what are you hoping to do for your students?

2. How do you go about accomplishing that goal?

3. What factors keep you from accomplishing that goal?

4. How are Gordon students different or similar to students in other institutions where you have taught?

5. At what point in the writing process do your students have the most problems?

6. To what do you attribute those problems?

7. How do paper topics develop in your composition courses?

8. What is your role in the development of student paper topics (and/or the paper itself)?

9. What is the role of the classroom environment in developing paper topics?

10. To what extent are your students involved in one another's inventing, planning, and writing?

APPENDIX C. FALL HEADCOUNT ENROLLMENT BY LEVEL AND CONTROL OF INSTITUTION

APPENDIX D. PART-TIME ENROLLMENTS AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ENROLLMENTS, 1970-1992

APPENDIX E. COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENROLLMENT BY AGE